Athens Journal of Tourism

Quarterly Academic Periodical, Volume 12, Issue 1
Published by the Athens Institute
URL: https://www.athensjournals.gr/ajt Email: journals@atiner.gr
e-ISSN: 2241-8148 DOI: 10.30958/ajt

March 2025

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Athens Institute is an Athens-based World Association of Academics and Researchers based in Athens. Athens Institute is an independent and non-profit Association with a Mission to become a forum where Academics and Researchers from all over the world can meet in Athens, exchange ideas on their research and discuss future developments in their disciplines, as well as engage with professionals from other fields. Athens was chosen because of its long history of academic gatherings, which go back thousands of years to Plato's Academy and Aristotle's Lyceum. Both these historic places are within walking distance from Athens Institute's downtown offices. Since antiquity, Athens was an open city. In the words of Pericles, Athens"…is open to the world, we never expel a foreigner from learning or seeing". ("Pericles' Funeral Oration", in Thucydides, The History of the Peloponnesian War). It is Athens Institute's mission to revive the glory of Ancient Athens by inviting the World Academic Community to the city, to learn from each other in an environment of freedom and respect for other people's opinions and beliefs. After all, the free expression of one's opinion formed the basis for the development of democracy, and Athens was its cradle. As it turned out, the Golden Age of Athens was in fact, the Golden Age of the Western Civilization. Education and (Re)searching for the 'truth' are the pillars of any free (democratic) society. This is the reason why Education and Research are the two core words in Athens Institute's name.

The *Athens Journal of Tourism* (AJT) is an Open Access quarterly double-blind peer reviewed journal and considers papers from all areas of tourism and related disciplines such as culture, leisure, recreation, geography, urban planning, heritage, sports, historical cities, landscape, architecture etc. The AJT considers theoretical and empirical papers as well as case studies and policy papers. The journal's aim is to be useful to both academics of tourism research and the practitioners of the tourism industry. Many of the papers published in this journal have been presented at the various conferences sponsored by the Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit of the Athens Institute. All papers are subject to Athens Institute's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement. A journal publication might take from a minimum of six months up to one year to appear. All papers are subject to Athens Institute's Publication Ethical Policy and Statement.

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ISSN NUMBER: 2241-8148 - DOI: 10.30958/ajt
Volume 12, Issue 1, March 2025
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The current issue is the first of the twelfth volume of the *Athens Journal of Tourism (AJT)*, published by the Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit of Athens Institute.

Gregory T. Papanikos
President
Athens Institute

Athens Institute for Education and Research

A World Association of Academics and Researchers

18th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies
14-18 April 2025, Athens, Greece

The **Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs** organizes the **18th Annual International Conference on Mediterranean Studies, 14-18 April 2025, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Mediterranean Studies, such as history, arts, archaeology, philosophy, culture, sociology, politics, international relations, economics, business, sports, environment and ecology, etc. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-MDT.doc).

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- **Dr. Steven Oberhelman,** Professor of Classics, Holder of the George Sumey Jr Endowed Professorship of Liberal Arts, and Associate Dean, Texas A&M University, USA, Vice President of International Programs, ATINER and Editor of the Athens Journal of History.
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- **Dr. Yannis Stivachtis**, Director, Center for European & Mediterranean Affairs and Associate Professor, Jean Monnet Chair & Director of International Studies Program, Virginia Tech – Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, USA.

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **4 March 2025**
- Submission of Paper: **17 March 2025**

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- Greek Night Entertainment (This is the official dinner of the conference)
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9-12 June 2025, Athens, Greece

The Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit of ATINER organizes its **21st Annual International Conference on Tourism, 9-12 June 2025, Athens, Greece** sponsored by the Athens Journal of Tourism. The aim of the conference is to bring together academics and researchers from all areas of Tourism. You may participate as stream leader, presenter of one paper, chair a session or observer. Please submit a proposal using the form available (https://www.atiner.gr/2025/FORM-TOU.doc).

Important Dates

- Abstract Submission: **18 February 2025**
- Acceptance of Abstract: 4 Weeks after Submission
- Submission of Paper: **12 May 2025**

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- **Dr. Valia Kasimati,** Head, Tourism, Leisure & Recreation Unit, Athens Institute & Researcher, Department of Economic Analysis & Research, Central Bank of Greece, Greece.
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Assistive System for Smart Tourism in Smart Environment: An ICT Approach for Over-tourism and Tourism Crisis Management

By Bertrand David, Hanna Reynaud-David± & René Chalon°*

Tourism is a significant global phenomenon of our contemporary society. Its ongoing evolution in terms of quality, diversity of offer, efficiency, and other key aspects is a natural and inevitable process. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are playing a pivotal role in this evolution, primarily through digitalization. This digitalization concern primary data management for transportation, stays, entertainment events reservation, constitutes an open-ended list of situations. It is possible to increase this approach by digitalization of information situated in the environment. This approach is known as coupling Smart City/Tourism and Smart Environment. An Assistive System is in charge to provide appropriate management support to this approach. The objective of this paper is to justify this Assistive System approach, to describe its architecture and adaptation process in order to take into account each particular context. A modelling language expressing elements of concerned situation is also presented as well as open-endedness needed. We discuss also the use of this approach in the context of sustainable tourism and its contribution to avoiding over-tourism. A case study related to crisis management in mountain skiing environment concretizes our contribution.

Keywords: *Smart tourism, smart environment, assistive system, over-tourism, crisis*

Introduction

Tourism is an important activity which that requires a range of support to evolve appropriately and accommodate an increasing number of actors. While digitalization is already present in data management, its potential for use in field problem management is a relatively new area that requires further investigation.

We view it as Smart Tourism in Smart Environment. To ensure the effective management of this orientation, an Assistive System is required. This system should support all aspects of management, and must be interactive, integrated, distributed, mobile and collaborative.

Tourism represents a significant activity in contemporary society, with an estimated impact on over one billion and 250 million individuals across the globe in 2023 (McKinsey & Company 2023). It is also important to consider another perspective: 95% of tourists expressed a desire to visit only 5% of the places offered

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*Emeritus Professor, Ecole Centrale de Lyon, CNRS, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 & Université Lumière Lyon 2, France.

±Student, Université Lumière Lyon, France.

°Associate Professor, Ecole Centrale de Lyon, CNRS, Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 & Université Lumière Lyon 2, France.

(Gidebo 2021). The recent developments concerning tourism are of great importance, as they involve the provision of solutions to an ever-increasing number of consumers and the consideration of constraints that are becoming increasingly prevalent. Two key concerns currently occupy the minds of those engaged in the field of tourism: the evolution of sustainable tourism and the avoidance of over-tourism in areas that are highly sought after (European Commission 2022). A third aspect that should not be overlooked is the management of crises, particularly those of a climatic nature, which are inherent to this area and which must be considered, prevented, and managed in situations that arise (Rasethuntsa 2023).

It has been demonstrated that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can make a significant contribution to the resolution of issues pertaining to the aforementioned aspects (Rosario & Dias 2022). Indeed, the concepts of smart tourism or e-tourism express a similar approach to the steps aimed at introducing digitalization into the context (Jones 2023b). The objective of digitalization is to provide services utilizing information and communication technologies (ICT), with a particular focus on the Internet, to facilitate the reservation of various services, including accommodations, transportation, dining, entertainment, and other activities. These services can be booked, paid for, and modified through digital channels. This dimension primarily concerns data management (DATA), which has reached a relatively advanced and satisfactory level, at least with regard to the data in the main flows. It is clear that further enhancements are possible, which will be demonstrated subsequently.

The phenomenon known as "smartification" is undergoing a second, more recent and evolving dimension. The objective is to transcend the data dimension and concentrate on the locations where actions are carried out. This entails considering the environmental context in which the various activities occur. This concept received the label "smart environment" or "e-environment." In this context, the digitalization of the environment is of concern, not only in terms of the data that are manipulated, but also in relation to the insertion of sensors and actuators that enable the monitoring of the environment and the implementation of actions within it. The integration of objects into the natural environment can be static, fixed in place, or dynamic, following the movements of the supporting entity. The supporting entities may be a physical object, such as a car, bicycle, boat, windsurfer, or other vehicle; an animal; or even a human. In all cases, the interactions between these objects and the central system, which may or may not be centralized, occur via a computer system known as the Internet of Things (IoT) (Mouha R 2021). It provides communication mechanisms between these disparate objects and the Assistance/Support System, which is responsible for the implementation of these novel operating principles for the benefit of users.

In the context of tourism, this approach can contribute appropriately to three key aspects of tourism management: sustainable tourism, over-tourism and the associated crisis prevention and management. The objective of this article is to describe main principles of the Assistive System in a generic approach, its architecture, design and implementation, and its adaptation to particular situations/contexts. A case study related to crisis management in mountain skiing environment concretizes our contribution. Our objective is not to answer the question of possible contributions of our approach to sustainable tourism and over-tourism. As ICT specialists we offer a range of generic possibilities, allowing tourism specialists to assess the suitability of our approach for their specific needs.

The remainder of this article is organized as follows: Section 2 presents a review of the current state of the art of reached aspects. Section 3 presents the architecture of the proposed assistance system. Section 4 outlines Assistive System adaptation methodology. Section 5 provides an overview of the cases studied and presents the use case Mountain Station Winter Smartification. Section 6 is dedicated to a discussion. Section 7 provides a conclusion to this article and presents future orientations.

State-of-the-art

Tourism is a multifaceted activity that can be defined as a desire of citizens to engage in leisure activities during periods of inactivity, such as short breaks, vacations, and retirement. Tourism can be defined as a state of being in which an individual is completely stationary (i.e., in one place), partially relocated (to a chosen destination that is relatively close or distant), or completely mobile in the form of excursions (Medlik 2023). The stays can be either individual (i.e., undertaken by one person or a family) or collective, depending on the size of the group. Travel may be undertaken by automobile, bus, train, or airplane or even by bicycle, by horse and on foot. The locations in question may be family residences, hotels, or holiday resorts, campervans and even cruise ships. The organization of these stays can be conducted individually or through organizations whose role is to suggest, assist, or manage these solutions. In the past, the primary actors in this field were travel agencies. As the diversity of solutions becomes increasingly apparent, other actors are also emerging, including transporters, rental companies, accommodation providers, and so forth. These actors are either working for travel agencies or directly for final users (clients). In this context, three concerns have emerged as increasingly pertinent and potential targets of our studies: the promotion of sustainable tourism, the avoidance of over-tourism and management of tourism crises (World Economic Forum 2017a). The digitalization of tourist activities, which encompasses the use of information and communication technologies (ICT), represents a potential and even significant response to these issues. We will first explain these different aspects and examine the different orientations already used before formulating our hypotheses, methodology, and contributions. Given the readers of this Journal's comprehensive understanding of all aspects of tourism, we will provide only a brief overview of the definitions and potential references.

Characteristic of Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism, also known as responsible tourism, is an approach that aims to minimize the environmental, social, and cultural impact of tourism while promoting economic benefits for local communities and the preservation of natural resources and cultural heritage in the long term (Xu et al. 2023). The following characteristics are indicative of sustainable tourism: respect for the environment and the conservation of natural resources. The objective of sustainable tourism is to reduce the consumption of resources, such as water, energy, and construction materials, through the implementation of eco-efficient practices (Morelli 2011). The respect for local cultures is evidenced by the encouragement of the preservation of traditions, customs, history, and cultural heritage. Furthermore, it is important to consider the protection of human rights, equitable economic benefits, and sustainable job creation, as well as the well-being of host communities (Chivandi et al. 2023) (World Travel and Tourism Council 2022).

Definition of Over-tourism

The term "over-tourism" is defined as an excessive influx of visitors, which places pressure on local resources, such as water, energy, and food resources, as well as local infrastructure, such as roads, public transport, and sanitary facilities. This can have negative consequences on the environment, local culture, infrastructure, and the quality of life of residents. Furthermore, it can lead to environmental deterioration of the natural environment, including air, water, and land pollution, loss of biodiversity, destruction of natural habitats, and overconsumption of resources (Gidebo 2021). In reality, over-tourism is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that can have significant negative impacts on tourism destinations. We will present our contribution to this issue.

Crisis Management in the Tourism Context

We address, as third aspect, the issue of crisis management in the context of tourism (Wut et al. 2021) (Faulkner 2003). What is the nature of environmental crisis management? Environmental crisis encompasses unforeseen events or disasters that threaten the environment, populations, and human activities. Such crises may be caused by natural phenomena, such as storms, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, or by human behaviors, technological incidents, industrial accidents, severe pollution, or pandemics.

The following are the principal aspects and steps of environmental crisis management (Pizam & Mansfeld 2006):

- Planning and preparation, which includes the following aspects: identification of potential risks, development of emergency plans, training and exercises.
- Alert and communication, which encompasses early warning systems, emergency communication, resource mobilization, rescue operations for people in danger, protection of critical infrastructure, and so forth.
- Crisis management, which involves operations coordination and continuous communication.
- Recovery and reconstruction, which includes damage assessment, reconstruction and restoration.

We will present our contributions to this problem.

Digitalization

Digitalization and virtualization are two of the most active and important approaches in a wide range of activities, including marketing, sales, enterprise management, and logistics (Chanias & Hess 2016). The objective is to replace physical documents and face-to-face contacts with digitalized documents shared worldwide and remote virtual access to their exchange and manipulation. The human face-to-face interaction is replaced by independent manipulation of these documents (data support). Furthermore, the tourism industry is also significantly affected by this evolution, not only in the stages of trip preparation, but also and primarily in mobile situations during trips.

Digitalization is the transformation of current working principles in the physical world to a new world that is more or less digital and virtual (El Saddik 2018). This evolution commenced at least 15 years ago and has been ongoing, rather than occurring in a linear fashion. This phenomenon can be observed in various fields, including marketing, customer relationship management (CRM), production, public services, logistics, and so on (Abdel-Aziz et al. 2016). While information-based services can be entirely digitized, physical object-based activities, production, and manipulation integrate physical and virtual activities with the Internet of Things (IoT) approach (Mouha R 2021). The digitalization of information can result in significant enhancements to data management, including enhanced quality, reduced processing times, and reduced associated costs.

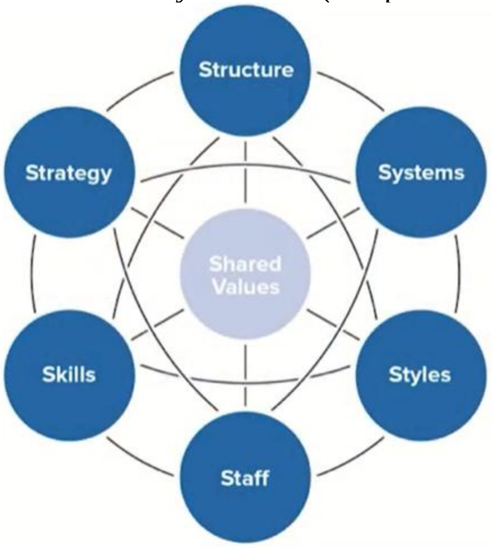
The process of digitalization is often presented as a three-step process, beginning with digitization. This refers to the transformation of physical documents (such as texts, drawings, etc.) into digital ones, which can be transported and modified more easily. The subsequent stage, designated as "digitalization" is characterized by the incorporation of manipulation tools (for these digital documents) that facilitate the sharing and presentation of data on diverse websites. The transportation of digital data between different locations of use is facilitated by computer networks and commonly accessible stores, either in specific servers or increasingly more in no-location cloud infrastructures. The final and most significant stage is known as digital transformation. This stage is concerned with the proposals of new organizations that consider the previously explained elements. This process leads to what is commonly referred to as “informatization” (Firican 2023).

Consequently, economic, social, and cultural relationships and barriers are re-examined and significantly altered. As previously stated, the methodological processes employed are distinct from the scope of actions undertaken. Nevertheless, there exist generic digitalization processes that can be employed directly or adapted to suit the specific requirements of a given field.

Globally, digitalization can be defined as a transformation process with the objective of proposing new practices, a new ecosystem, new stakeholders, a new business model, and new management in order to provide better customer services.

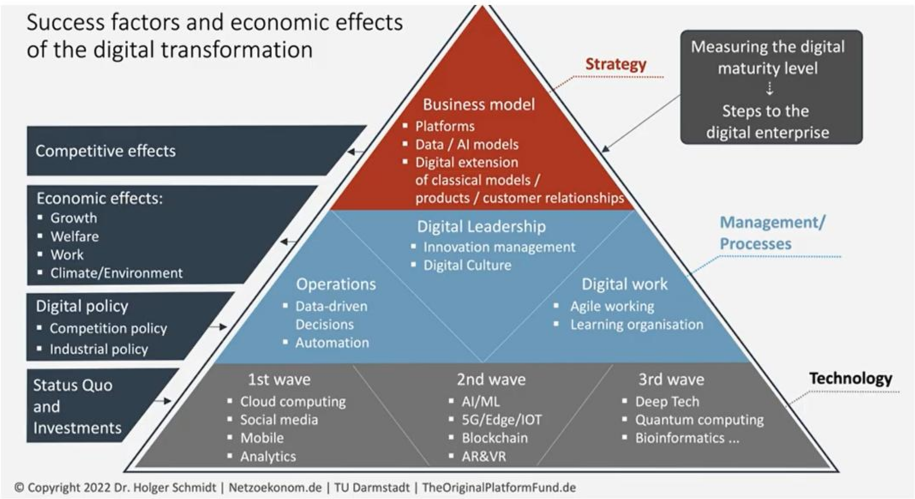
For this purpose, a variety of more or less elaborate processes are proposed. We shall mention only two models. The McKinsey 7S model (Shaqrah 2018), which provides an overview of the main components of an appropriate digitalization approach, including Strategy, Structure, Supportive Systems and Managing Styles, Working Staff, and Members' Main Skills, as well as Shared Values (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *McKinsey 7S Model (Shaqrah 2018)*



Further refinement of the model is proposed in The Big Picture of Digital Transformation (Big Picture), which synthesizes all aspects, elements, and methods (Figure 2). These approaches facilitate the organization of the design and development stages.

Figure 2. *Digital Transformation - The Big Picture (Edition 2022) (Big Picture)*



The Influence of Digitalization on Tourism

The advent of digital technology has had a profound impact on the global tourism economy. The digital revolution has transformed the operations of urban centers, tourist bureaus, and travel professionals. Cities are investing in the development of tangible and interactive media (Frolov & Strekalova 2021). In tourist offices, it is becoming increasingly common to utilize dynamic displays and other tactile supports that enhance the presentation of expected vacancy locations to potential clients (Camilleri 2018). In addition to tourist offices, museums, shopping malls, fairs, festivals, and other tourist sites are also equipped with these technologies in order to offer travelers an unforgettable and rich experience (Ionita 2017) (Massari & Del Vecchio 2022).

The tourism industry is undergoing a period of significant transformation. The advent of new technologies has given rise to novel forms of tourism.

- M-tourism, also referred to as mobile tourism, is the act of reserving holidays directly via a mobile or touchpad device (Chen et al. 2021).
- Social tourism entails selecting accommodations based on social networks (Minnaert et al. 2009).
- E-tourism is the convergence of the Internet and tourism, resulting in a multitude of digital experiences (Hamid et al. 2021).

The immersive and interactive travel agency of the 21st century is already a reality and continues to expand via the Metaverse approach (Metaverse), which we will discuss in greater detail later.

The term "tourism digitalization" refers to the integration and utilization of digital technologies across the entirety of the tourism industry, encompassing all stages of the travel planning and booking process, as well as the on-site traveler experience.

Tourism Digitalization Tools

The array of digitalization tools utilized in the tourism industry is diverse and encompasses various facets of the tourist experience, encompassing both the planning and execution phases of the trip. The following is a list of the principal tools utilized in the digitalization of tourism. Online reservation platforms represent a significant advancement in the field of digitalization of tourism. Similarly, mobile travel apps have become invaluable resources for travelers. Digital marketing and social media, which utilize digital marketing strategies, have also played a pivotal role in the digitalization of tourism. These strategies encompass online advertising campaigns, social media platforms and virtual and augmented reality technologies. These digital tools for the tourism industry facilitate the planning, booking, and enjoyment of trips in a more efficient, convenient, and personalized manner. At the same time, they enable tourism businesses to better meet the needs and expectations of their customers.

This digitalization approache has been designated as "Smart Tourism". The aforementioned activities are computerized. In order to clarify this approach in a structured manner, we will examine it successively, as follows: The concept of Smart Tourism is defined as the integration of digital technologies into the tourism sector, with the aim of enhancing the efficiency, convenience, and personalization of the travel experience for travelers, while simultaneously improving the ability of tourism businesses to meet customer expectations.

Smart Tourism in Smart Environment

The concept of the "Smart Environment," also referred to as the e-environment (Gretzel et al. 2015), pertains to the utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT) in order to encompass a range of activities, including environmental monitoring, natural resource management, optimization of waste and recycling, transport and mobility management, smart public lighting, prevention of natural disasters, and awareness raising and citizen participation.

The junction of "Smart Tourism" and "Smart Environment" refers to the utilization of information and communication technologies (ICT) to advance sustainable tourism practices that are environmentally conscious and integrated into broader development initiatives for intelligent territories. This entails integrating smart tourism principles into a destination's overarching environmental management strategies. The following items will present some of the key aspects of this concept: The integration of digital technologies in tourist attractions, the implementation of sustainable mobile applications and booking platforms, the intelligent management of tourist flows, the fostering of environmental awareness and traveler education, the establishment of public-private partnerships for sustainable tourism, and the utilization of data for environmental management are all aspects of the integration of smart tourism into smart environment initiatives. By integrating smart tourism into smart environment initiatives, tourism destinations can offer more sustainable, attractive, and environmentally friendly travel experiences. It is not only limited to data access, integration and manipulation, but takes into account data localization as source and destination of users' behaviors in relation with the perception, respect and understanding of in the field behaviors.

Management of Crisis in the Context of Smart Tourism in Smart Environment

Crisis management encompasses the processes of planning, preparation, response, and recovery from unforeseen events or disasters that threaten the environment, populations, and human activities. Such crises may be caused by natural phenomena, such as storms, floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, forest fires, or by technological incidents, industrial accidents, severe pollution, pandemics or by human actions (Wut et al. 2021) (Faulkner 2003) (Standing et al. 2012).

In more specific terms, environmental crisis management in the context of smart tourism and smart environment naturally involves the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) to anticipate, manage, and mitigate the effects of natural disasters and environmental incidents on destinations, tourism, and local ecosystems. We can list a number of ways in which Smart Tourism in Smart Environment can contribute to the management of environmental crises (Standing et al. 2012):

- The use of environmental sensors and real-time monitoring systems to detect warning signs of crisis, such as pollution levels, climate variations, and natural hazards, is essential for effective surveillance and prevention. The integration of geospatial and meteorological data into Smart Tourism platforms allows for a more comprehensive understanding of risk areas and the implementation of preventive alerts for travelers and local residents.

- The development of emergency and crisis management plans that integrate real-time data, simulation models, and predictive analytics for a more rapid and effective response. The use of computer modeling to simulate different crisis scenarios and assess potential impacts on tourism infrastructure, ecosystems, and populations.
- Communication and Alerts: The establishment of ICT-based early warning systems is essential for informing travelers, residents, and tourism stakeholders of impending emergencies and safety measures to take. The utilization of smart tourism mobile applications to provide real-time updates on environmental conditions, alternative routes, evacuations, and other pertinent information is recommended. The utilization of online platforms and crisis management applications is essential for the coordination of relief efforts, the allocation of resources in an efficient manner, and the facilitation of communication and collaboration between local authorities, response teams, and relief organizations.
- Sustainable recovery and reconstruction: Planning for post-crisis reconstruction by integrating sustainable practices, such as restoring ecosystems, building resilient structures, using renewable energy, etc. The promotion of sustainable recovery tourism is achieved by the highlighting of environmentally friendly reconstruction initiatives, the showcasing of eco-responsible products and services, and the raising of travelers' awareness of the importance of supporting affected destinations.

Assistive Systems

It has been the case since at least the 19th century that tourist trips have required the provision of supportive assistance (Bhatia 2012). This assistance was initially provided in a physical and paper-based format, and was provided prior to the trip. The evolution of assistive systems is a permanent and ongoing process, and it is likely to continue in the future. It is possible to cite the evolution of physical agencies to virtual technologies through the emergence of the Internet (Kautson 2004). It is crucial to highlight the evolution of one-off contact to continuous access to appropriate information, contextualization by geolocation, and the Internet of Things. In this new context, the success of this evolution is contingent upon the efficacy of user interfaces and the satisfaction of users with regard to their interactions with these interfaces. The evolution is characterized by utility, usability, and user satisfaction. Given the ongoing complexity of these factors, ensuring their guarantee is challenging.

As previously stated, the context of smart tourism in a smart environment necessitates the implementation of an assistive system that enables all categories of users to access available information, modify it, collaborate with others, and share it. The assistance system provides users with the capacity to act as either customers or professional providers. It enables them to manage reservation activities, including transportation, accommodation, and various rentals, as well as their modifications, cancellations, and support in difficult cases of malfunctions and errors.

Assistive System Objectives

In order to provide appropriate services in an organized assistive system, it is essential to identify the key elements of this system. Globally, information and communication technologies (ICT) are responsible for data collection, storage, and management, as well as for appropriate manipulations in different working situations. They also provide communication over short and long distances by wireless and wired networks, in mobility, and interact with the environment in which active and passive things are organized in the Internet of Things (IoT). Two crucial aspects are human-computer interaction (HCI) and the development of new services based on artificial intelligence (AI). The primary objectives of HCI are related to multimodal and multi-channel communication with various devices and interaction styles, including touch-based and speech-based interactions (chatbots), as well as AR (augmented reality) approaches and the imminent Metaverse. These interactions may occur on a desktop computer or with mobile devices, including smartphones, connected watches, and tablets. This allows for individual and collaborative situations, as well as large, in-the-field screens or in-vehicle HCI devices, such as those found on vehicle dashboards.

From the perspective of artificial intelligence, big data, open data, and machine and deep learning are primarily employed to identify pertinent information within the vast quantity of data available and to synthesize observed behaviors derived from typical data. An illustrative summary is presented in Figure 3, which initially addresses the concept of a smart city. This framework can be readily adapted to encompass the domain of smart tourism, as evidenced by the work of (Liu & Peng 2014).

Figure 3. *Smart City Architecture summarized by Liu and Peng (Liu & Peng 2014)*

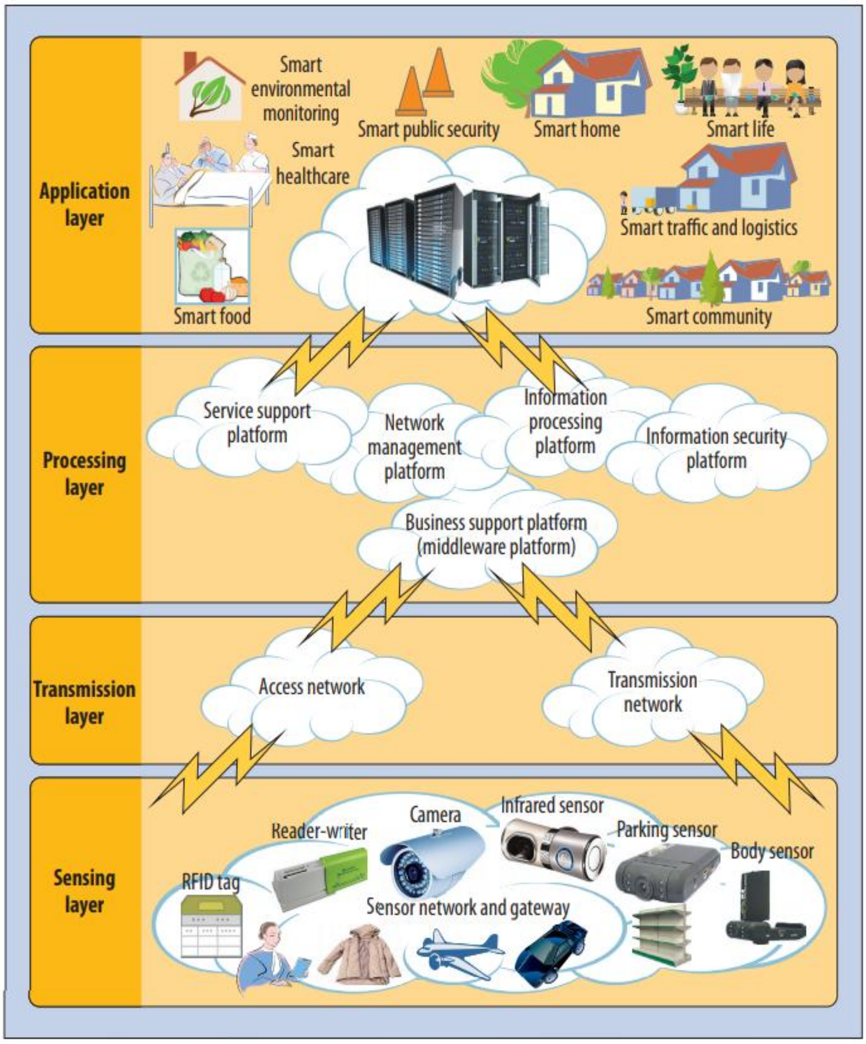
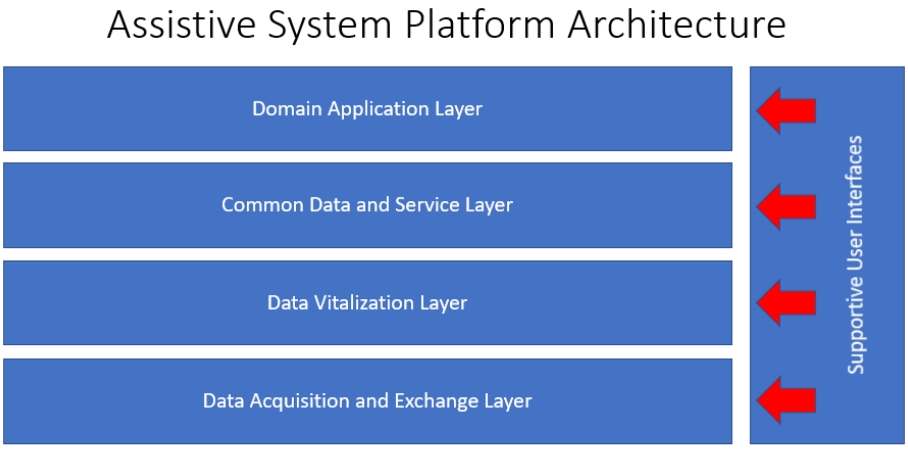


Figure 4. *a. Assistive System Architecture of a Supportive Platform with Data Vitalization (Xiong 2012), b. Supportive User Interface (David & Chalon 2009)*



Assistive System Platform

In order to organize these disparate elements, it is necessary to create or utilize a supportive platform that facilitates connections between people, services, and even objects in ways that were previously inconceivable. In order to organize and manage these aspects, it is necessary to implement a system that groups the different services and their applications, the data on which they work, and the relationship, if needed, between the field and the system. The system is structured in four layers (Figure 4):

- The first layer is dedicated to applications,
- The second layer is focused on the management of common data and the provision of general services.
- Layer 3 is concerned with the process of data vitalization (Xiong 2012). The objective is to work on data and develop new constructions based on it that can be utilized in new applications. One example of this necessity is the ability to collect and associate data in order to manage situations that were not predictable, such as multiple instances of rescue in situations that were not necessarily easily predictable.
- Layer 4 is designed to facilitate the acquisition and distribution of data essential for the optimal functioning of all applications.

In order to accommodate the evolving needs of the assistive system, an appropriate user interface, called the Supportive User Interface, has been implemented. This interface enables maintenance staff to facilitate the modifications requested. The "mashup" technique can be employed for this purpose (Grammel & Storey 2008).

A generic intermediation platform must be adapted to different working situations. The objective is to provide an appropriate collection of data, services, and acquisition sensors and valuators that are capable of working together in a vitalization approach and creating adapted user interfaces that facilitate appropriate interactions. The mashup approach represents an intriguing methodology for facilitating these adaptations. Mashups are defined as "the software engineering approach, which is able to construct new applications by assembling and combining several existing functions" (Atrouche et al. 2015).

The Mashup architecture is comprised of three fundamental elements, as elucidated by Merrill (cited in (Atrouche et al. 2015)). The three elements of the Mashup architecture are data, services, and user interface. The objective of a mashup is to create a three-tier application, comprising the following components: (1) data integration, (2) application logic, and (3) user interface. The integration of heterogeneous data sources employs two principal technologies: web services and mashup.

In the context of intermediation platforms, application mashuping represents a highly valued approach for the creation of appropriate applications based on the reuse of existing ones. The architecture is based on a four-layer model (Figure 4a). To update or adapt data and services, a particular user interface is employed, designated as the "Supportive UI." The objective of this interface is to facilitate the introduction of appropriate adaptations concerning data, services, IoT exchanges, and HCI. The supportive user interface, which is also oriented towards the creation or evolution of mashup applications, proposes a programming interface for experienced developers and a visual programming-oriented approach for experienced users (Figure 4b).

Data Identification and Dynamicity Management

In order to identify the data needed for all identified activities and applications, it is important to determine their evolution, or dynamicity. A total of five levels and providers of data dynamicity were identified.

The initial, fundamental level is entirely static, which means it is not intelligent but is nevertheless useful for a significant proportion of city users (in total or by category). This includes physical panels, boards, and signs, as well as circulation signs. A case in point is the use of city maps, circulation signs, and so forth.

The second level, which exhibits minimal dynamicity, is based on boards with QR codes. In this instance, the information indicator is static, whereas the dynamicity is provided by the information sent to the user’s smartphone from the website address encoded in the QR code. This approach is well-suited to the dissemination of optional information, which is accessed exclusively by interested users and known only to them. This may include historical information, as well as commercial and advertising materials.

The third level of dynamicity is characterized by the need to disseminate information that is of general interest and needs to be commonly known. One solution is to disseminate the information directly to users' smartphones or to GPS vehicle screens. An alternative solution is the utilization of public active screens and information boards (Wang et al. 2015). This kind of dynamicity is typically determined by external decision-making centers that work with data that has been collected or that has been predefined.

The fourth level of dynamicity is contextual dynamicity, which is defined as the ability of a system to produce particular cases or situations in response to an action on a local device, whether manually or automatically. A classic example is a remote control located on a bus, which the driver activates to open a barrier, allowing access to a restricted portion of the road. This type of sender (or remote control) can be either integrated into the vehicle (e.g., bicycle, automobile, bus, boat, etc.) or operated manually by the user, frequently in emergency situations. Such devices are duly registered with the relevant authority. The actuator associated with the remote control can be either monolithic or mono-selective, acting on a single door, barrier, etc., or integrated in a system that assists in the execution of more sophisticated behaviors. The management of this dynamicity necessitates the establishment of an appropriate association between the sender(s) and the receiver(s) in order to organize the corresponding behaviors.

The fifth and highest level of concern pertains to the dynamicity of emergency and rescue situations, which are primarily related to weather and environmental conditions, such as floods, landslides, tsunamis, ecological and industrial problems, and fires. In such circumstances, the objective is to collect pertinent information and disseminate it to the relevant authorities, who are responsible for determining the most appropriate actions and informing those who are affected (both those who are required to take action and those who are impacted).

As previously stated, it is crucial to deploy sensors in a strategic manner throughout water, air, and other environments for fire detection. These sensors must be capable of transmitting accurate data to the rescue center in a timely manner. The synthesis of these data is then elaborated, and an emergency signal is propagated to all information media, both individual and collective, in the city with vocal and/or visual announcements indicating the actions to be undertaken.

To achieve greater levels of dynamism, three distinct approaches can be employed. The first approach is entirely contingent upon the local context. The objective of local senders addressing local receivers is to elicit responses that are both local and appropriate. A more general solution would be to enable the sharing of available data that is collected by communication devices, namely senders and receivers, on site in the field, the city, and its neighborhood. This data would be open to external users for their applications and services. This approach ultimately leads to the creation of what is referred to as Open Data (Auer et al. 2007) (Kitchin 2014), which represents a significant advancement in the general accessibility of large-scale data of interest.

Another intriguing approach is based on the evolution of collected data through the acquisition of more recent data and their integration into the elaborated behavioral model. This approach is based on a research field known as machine and deep learning, which aims to aggregate collected data and create a progressively more accurate behavioral model synthesizing observed situations. This process of data aggregation is referred to as data vitalization (Xiong 2012), which enables the adaptation of collected data to new observed situations.

Data Model Structure, Access Management and Integration Approaches

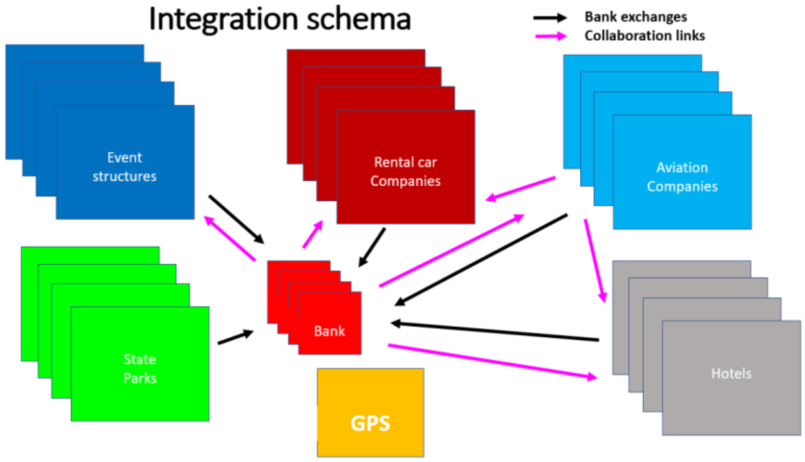
All assistive services must utilize, generate, or evolve data, which may be personal, ephemeral, long-lasting, public, or a combination of these characteristics. These services are employed in a variety of settings, including elementary and more sophisticated multi-services. In the event that ephemeral data are collected, elaborated, and utilized on a regular basis, it is necessary to store data with a long-term duration in order to facilitate their use. Such data may be stored individually or collectively, according to a specific theme, in what is known as a data silo. A more general integration is also a possibility, but for the purposes of smartification, it seems important to maintain the ability to receive new applications using existing or new data. In this manner, partial integration represents an appropriate solution when considering the use of thematic silos and the implementation of appropriate application programming interfaces (APIs) for the management of data access. The inter-silo relations are similarly situated with respect to the necessity of implementing major exchanges and the requirement to enhance the efficiency of less frequently utilized operations. It seems that total integration is unattainable, as the global system is not closed but rather open-ended, capable of receiving new services and applications on a daily basis, which support new visions of digitalized and virtual tourist activities.

From the standpoint of integration, we identify two primary categories of configurations: elementary configurations, which are limited to a single issue, and more or less integrated multi-issue configurations. It is evident that this is not an integrated system, but rather a partially integrated approach. It is evident that banks are connected or interfaced with the majority of proposed services, primarily for the purpose of facilitating payment transactions. Additionally, banks propose related activities that necessitate integration or, at the very least, data exchange with other applications (e.g., hotel reservations, rental cars, etc.). Similarly, airlines also offer ancillary services such as hotel reservations and rental cars.

Hotel reservations can be classified into three categories: homogeneous, heterogeneous, and generic. Homogeneous reservations are made through established hotel chains, such as Hilton or Best Western. Heterogeneous reservations are made through independent providers, such as Choice Privilege. Generic reservations are made through online booking platforms, such as Booking or Hotels. Each category has distinct management of reservations, modifications, and other services. Individual services are also employed for purposes such as access to state parks, museum visits, and even the operation of specific structures.

As illustrated in Figure 5, GPS (or other GNSS) represents an independent digitalized service, whereas banking is a more prevalent digitalized service, primarily utilized for financial transactions. The integration of services allows for the concurrent use of multiple services, such as the reservation of a hotel through an airline digital service. It would appear that integration based on systematic data standardization is not an appropriate solution, as the data used by different services are at least partially different, and their integration could be too complicated, necessitating complex exchanges between services. A mixed approach, with a local data store for specific data and a shared store in a chosen location for shared data, would appear to be an appropriate solution (payment data stored in a bank service).

Figure 5. *Silo and Inter-silo Exchanges and Collaborations*



The introduction of a new digitalized service can be either independent or contingent upon collaboration with other services that are already present. In order for these services to be compatible with one another, they must provide an API (Application Programming Interface), which is a standardized approach for their interconnection.

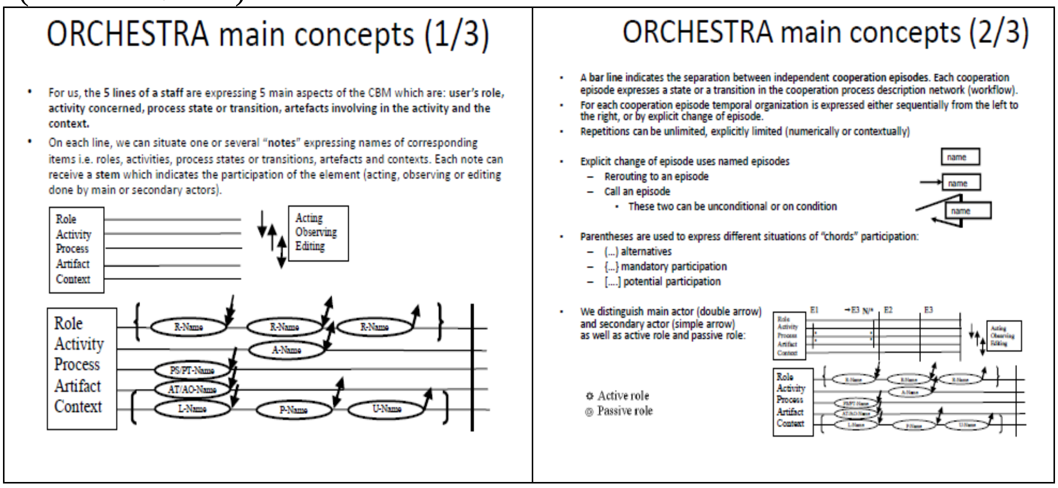
Assistive System Adaptation Methodology

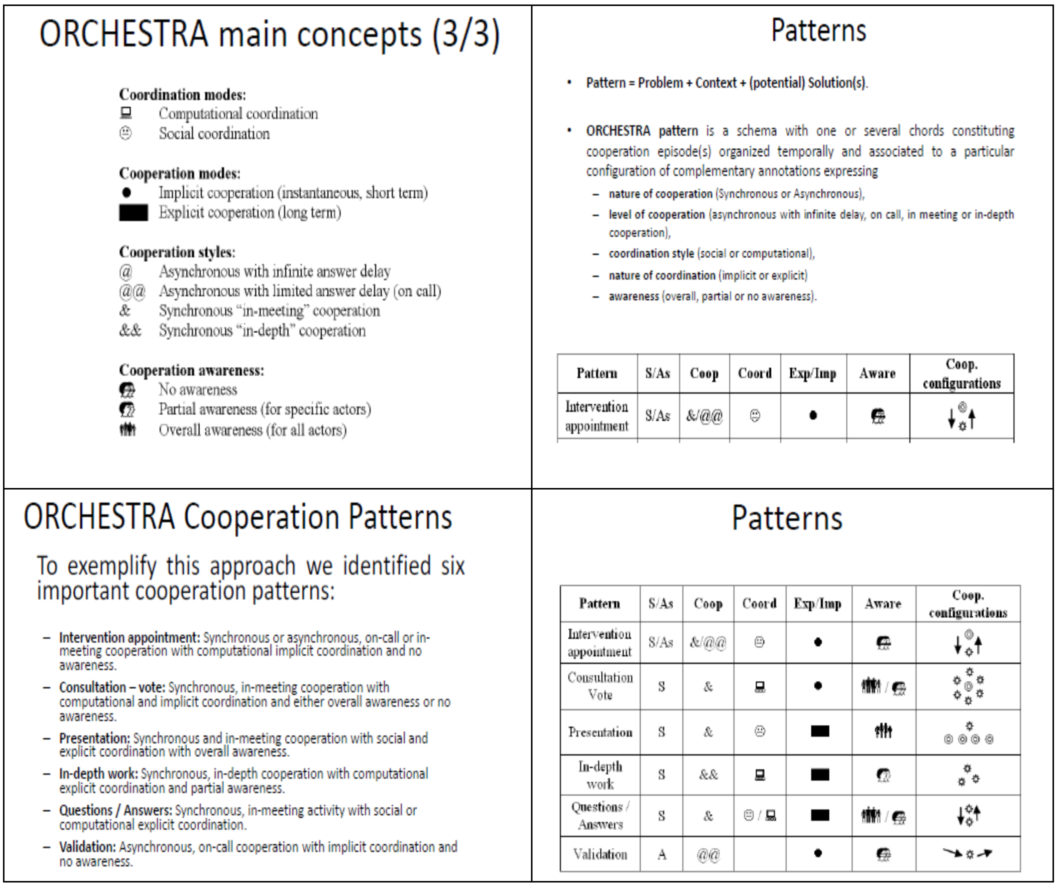
One crucial aspect of the design of a novel assistive system is devoted to contextual modeling. The objective of this process is to identify all actors who are affected by the system, the activities they perform, the data they use, and the geographically distributed objects with their behaviors.

Modeling Formalism - ORCHESTRA

We proposed a language called ORCHESTRA (David et al. 2006) (David et al. 2007), which facilitates the expression of the working conditions of an assistive system. This system is interactive, collaborative, integrated, distributed, and mobile, and it is adapted to the studied cases. The musical score expresses all of the collected characteristics of the Cooperative Behavior Model (CMS), which are as follows: the user's role, the activity concerned, the process state or transition, the artefacts involved in the activity, and the context, which is mainly location or mobility.

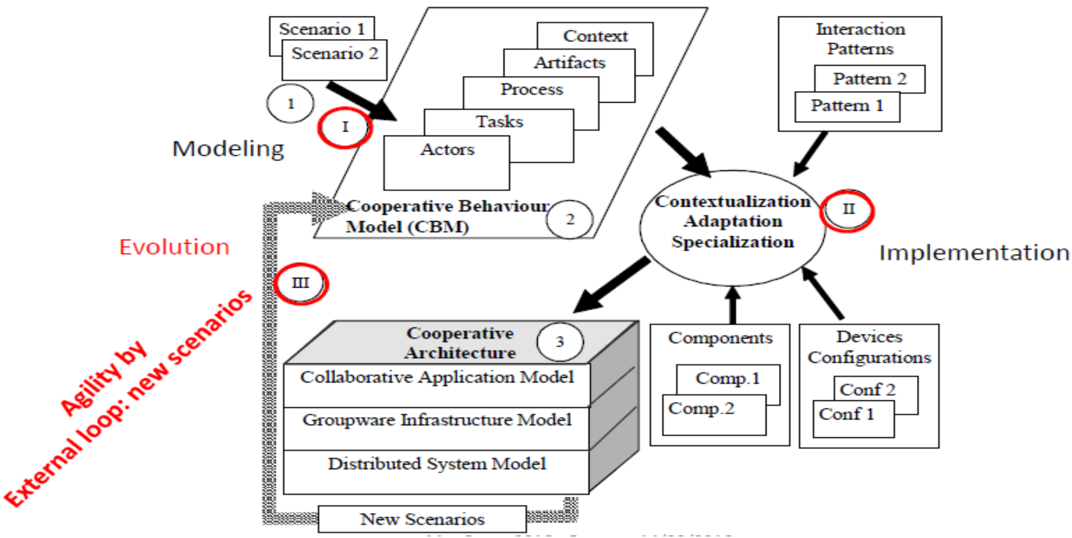
Figure 6. *ORCHESTRA Modeling Formalism Explanation* (David et al. 2006) (David et al. 2007)





Following the completion of the modeling work, the elaborated model is then projected into the assistive system platform architecture (Figure 7). We give in the section "Case studies" an example of this modelling.

Figure 7. *ORCHESTRA Modeling Projection on Assistive System Platform (David et al. 2006)*



Design and Deployment Approaches for an Assistive System Creation and Evolution

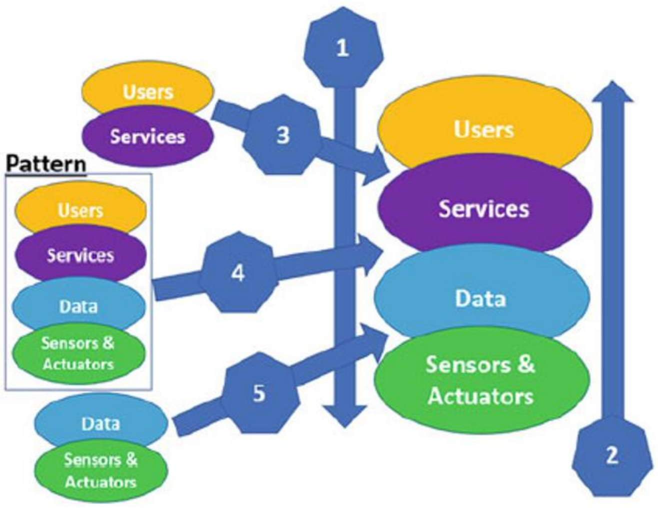
In order to develop an Assistive System for Smart Tourism, there are a number of potential ways that can be pursued (Figure 8) (David et al. 2022). The simplest approach is to develop a new application from the scratch and deploy it. When multiple applications are proposed, a more system-oriented approach is recommended, whereby they are integrated to varying degrees.

In this case the design of a system can be approached in a number of different ways, depending on the context in which it is being developed. In the context of a system design for Smart Tourism, the top-down approach (1, in Figure 8) appears to be the most appropriate. In this case, the study starts with the identification of potential users and corresponding services through a discussion with them. This enables the identification of their wishes and expectations. The subsequent stages of the process involve the identification of data on which the selected services can operate and, finally, the sensors and actuators required to establish an appropriate relationship with the field. These disparate elements are integrated in a sequential manner and incorporated into the Assistive System Platform previously presented.

Conversely, the bottom-up approach (2, in Figure 8) may be more appropriate if the objective is to identify which services can be provided to potential users based on available data. In this instance, the operational process begins with the identification of field-based devices and the data they provide. Additionally, the determination of services and potential users is conducted at a later stage. This environment-based approach is most suitable when the initial focus is on a broad range of issues and the potential user base and available services are not limited.

It is also possible to adopt an extension-oriented approach between these two extremes. This approach is likely to be the most commonly used. Its defining characteristic is its capacity for adaptation to extension-oriented situations, which encompasses the consideration of new users, new services, and/or new data integration into an existing Smart Tourism Assistive System (3, in Figure 8).

Figure 8. *Design and Deployment Approaches*



In this case, two sub-approaches can be distinguished, in the same way as for the "from scratch" approach. These are the top-down and bottom-up approaches, which utilize different starting points. The former is based on users and services, while the latter is based on data, sensors, and actuators. In these two cases, the objective of this integration process is to identify the new set of actors and homogenize services, data, sensors, and actuators in order to avoid redundancy and incoherence, which are difficult to manage during the life of the platform.

An alternative approach is based on the integration and reuse of off-the-shelf applications, which have been previously created and proposed as pattern solutions (4, in Figure 8). In this instance, the integration process may also encompass homogenization, taking into account the characteristics of all the patterns. The objective is to achieve a homogeneous system by integrating the users, services, data, sensors, and actuators.

The final approach is based on open data as a starting point (5, in Figure 8), with the integration or elaboration of appropriate services using them.

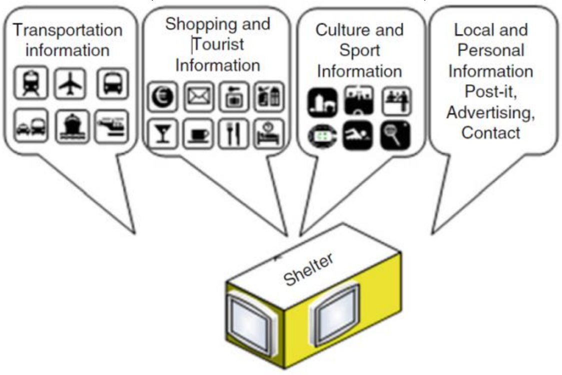
Case Studies

Case Studies: Previously Studied

In our previous projects and published papers, we have primarily focused on the context of smart cities, with the following examples illustrating our work in this area:

- Goods and parcel distribution rounds based on parking reservation (Patier et al. 2014).
- Parcel transportation based on subway passengers with human-human transmission or using individual boxes (Li et al. 2021).
- Accompanying children or disabled persons in public transportation (Li et al. 2021).
- Management of route lanes in relation with transportation traffic prioritizing public vehicles (buses, emergency and firefighters' vehicles) asking lane reservation by in-vehicle transmitter and informing other drivers either by in-field boards and/or on in-vehicle dashboard screen (Wang et al. 2015).
- Beach management in the context of the ongoing pandemic (with reservation and rescue services) (Chalon et al. 2022).
- Smartification of a coastal city, an extensive approach (David et al. 2024).
- Finally, the installation includes a bus shelter with integrated information and support for carpooling. This shelter displays transportation solicitations and proposals on a large screen (Figure 9) (David & Chalon 2010).

Figure 9. *Bus Shelter (David & Chalon 2010)*



Case Study: Mountain Station Winter Smartification

The objective of this study is to examine the transformation of a mountain station into a smart mountain station during the winter season. The primary characteristics of the weather conditions are snow and frost, which have both positive and negative consequences. The positive consequences include the opportunity for skiing activities and the prevention and management of avalanches. The negative consequences include circulation problems and the organization of rescue operations. This case study will be presented in conjunction with the previously described design and deployment approaches.

Top-down Approach: Mountain Station Winter Smartification

In order to gain the most comprehensive understanding of this complex issue, a top-down approach is the most suitable methodology. All issues related to tourism can be considered as a starting point for analysis: Transportation from and to the station, including internal circulation for all actors (buses, supplying trucks, cars, pedestrians, and stay reservations), etc. It is of course necessary to include all aspects of mountain station winter tourism (skiing, on-sledge circulation, etc.). In this comprehensive analysis, it is essential to consider the principles of sustainable tourism, the avoidance of over-tourism, and crisis management. It is evident that skiing and other snow and ice activities are of particular concern in this context. It is therefore appropriate to start this process by engaging in discourse with potential users and collating their anticipated services. The next step is to identify the data that is needed, to collect it using appropriate devices, and to manage it over an extended period. This data must then be disseminated to users in an appropriate format, such as through wireless networks.

From the perspective of the application, it is a top-down design, beginning with a general discussion and progressive refinement of all necessary aspects (treatments, data, user interfaces, in-city devices, etc.).

Extension-oriented Approach: Traffic Management in the Winter Mountain Station

The organization of traffic is a crucial aspect of any transportation plan. It is evident that during the low season, a static allocation of the circulation map is a viable option. However, in the high season, the objective of dynamicity is to ensure better traffic speed by introducing various restrictions at different times of the day, with either authorized or prohibited vehicles. Such dynamicity is either based on collected and preprocessed data (behavioral patterns) or on real-time data, including temperature, snow level, wind speed, and snowstorm intensity. Furthermore, the management of the circulation related to the use of snow removal engines is also to be considered. This information is then disseminated to the driver assistance system and drivers in an appropriate manner. This may be done electronically via signs or by transmitting the relevant information to in-vehicle screens, smartphones, and GPS applications. From the perspective of the application, we consider it to be an extension-oriented approach, whereby new functionalities and behaviors are added to the system.

Open Data as Starting Point

The Open Data (Auer et al. 2007) as Starting Point approach involves the collection of generally available data, which is then filtered and integrated or elaborated into appropriate messages for distribution to interested users. In the context of our case study, it is necessary to consider a number of factors related to winter conditions, including temperature, snow levels, wind direction and intensity, the likelihood of snow storms and the potential for avalanches. These factors must be disseminated to relevant institutions, including hotels, tourist agencies, clients and professionals, through appropriate channels, such as light panels, bulletin boards, emails, SMS and social networks.

Pattern Use: Access Control to Protected Areas

The control of access to restricted areas is a widely employed strategy to mitigate the adverse effects of over-tourism. One particularly well-known solution is employed in numerous US National Parks. A digitalized service is necessary to obtain a timed entry reservation to enter the park, even if one already possesses a pass. Annual passes entail the payment of entrance fees, thus exempting holders of annual or senior passes from the additional $2 reservation fee. The timed entry reservation is employed to regulate the influx of visitors to the parks during the summer season, when access is particularly congested (Figure 10). A website has been created for the distribution of timed entry tickets in relation to the number of potential visitors (Plan Your Visit).

Figure 10. *Arches National Park access control*

A similar service was identified for museum access management at the Getty Villa and Getty Museum in Los Angeles.

In the case of the winter mountain, over-frequency can provide interesting solutions. A number of adaptations can be implemented in order to facilitate a wide range of potential uses. Access restrictions may be based on temporal factors, such as exceeding the global daily capacity or a specific time slot (e.g., AM, PM, or hourly). Alternatively, they may be related to specific conditions (e.g., temperature, water or snow level, wind, animals' or birds' special period).

It may be beneficial to adapt these restrictions to slope access limitations, city access limitations, and off-road skiing control. The control of the level of ski required for each category of ski slope is essential. This approach can also be employed to regulate the cost of ski passes in relation to the ski level and slopes utilized.

Bottom-up Approach: Emergency and Rescue Services in Ski Area

The convergence of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies), Smart Tourism, and Smart Environment enables the creation of Assistive Systems that can make a significant contribution to the management of environmental crises (Figure 11).

For the effective management of crises, a more complex solution is required, and an appropriate process must be in place. As previously stated in the section on the state of the art, crisis management is based on four phases, which occur in a sequential order:

1. Creation of an Appropriate Working Context
2. Activation of the Operational Period
3. Activation of Appropriate Rescue Level
4. Activation of Post-Crisis Management

The case presented here is limited to that of a skiing area, as the problem of emergency management in urban areas is a common occurrence. The optimal approach to addressing crises related to skiing is to equip both skiers and mountain professionals, including ski patrollers, pole operators, and groomers, with appropriate movement and rescue transceivers. It is imperative that the area be secured by protecting the chairlifts and ski lifts. The marking of trails and the placement of avalanche detectors represent an important method of protection and information dissemination. It is also imperative to install intrusion detectors in areas deemed dangerous. It is necessary to equip snow groomers for ski slopes with GPS and rollover sensors, among other devices, in order to be able to follow their movements and to identify any navigation mistakes that they may make. All skiers traversing areas deemed dangerous must be equipped with transceivers and registered in the Assistive System. This is the content of the initial phase of the Assistive System's operational functionality.

The subsequent phase is devoted to observations, which are conducted over a specified period of time. It is to be expected that the sound communication system, comprising information panels and light beacons, will be operational throughout this period. Furthermore, the reception system for all communications provided by in-area transceivers, whether originating from humans or from in-environment senders, will be fully functional. During this operational phase, the Assistive System is capable of receiving and responding to informative messages with geolocation data for the senders.

The subsequent phase is dedicated to the activation of the rescue organization. Upon receipt of a corresponding message, the Assistive System and its users (rescue managers) are able to determine the level of emergency and organize appropriate treatments and actions. In the case of a ski injury, for instance, ski patrollers can determine the level of emergency and organize appropriate treatments and actions. This may involve activating a rescue team and providing information to concerned persons (clients, ski professionals, etc.). In the case of an avalanche, a rescue team is activated and appropriate information is provided to concerned persons via selected information channels. In the event that a rescue team is required, or if a helicopter is needed, these resources will be deployed. In this instance, the system is capable of establishing a specific communication link between team members and victims. The establishment of an appropriate communication connection between all actors in mobility is essential for the effective management of emergencies.

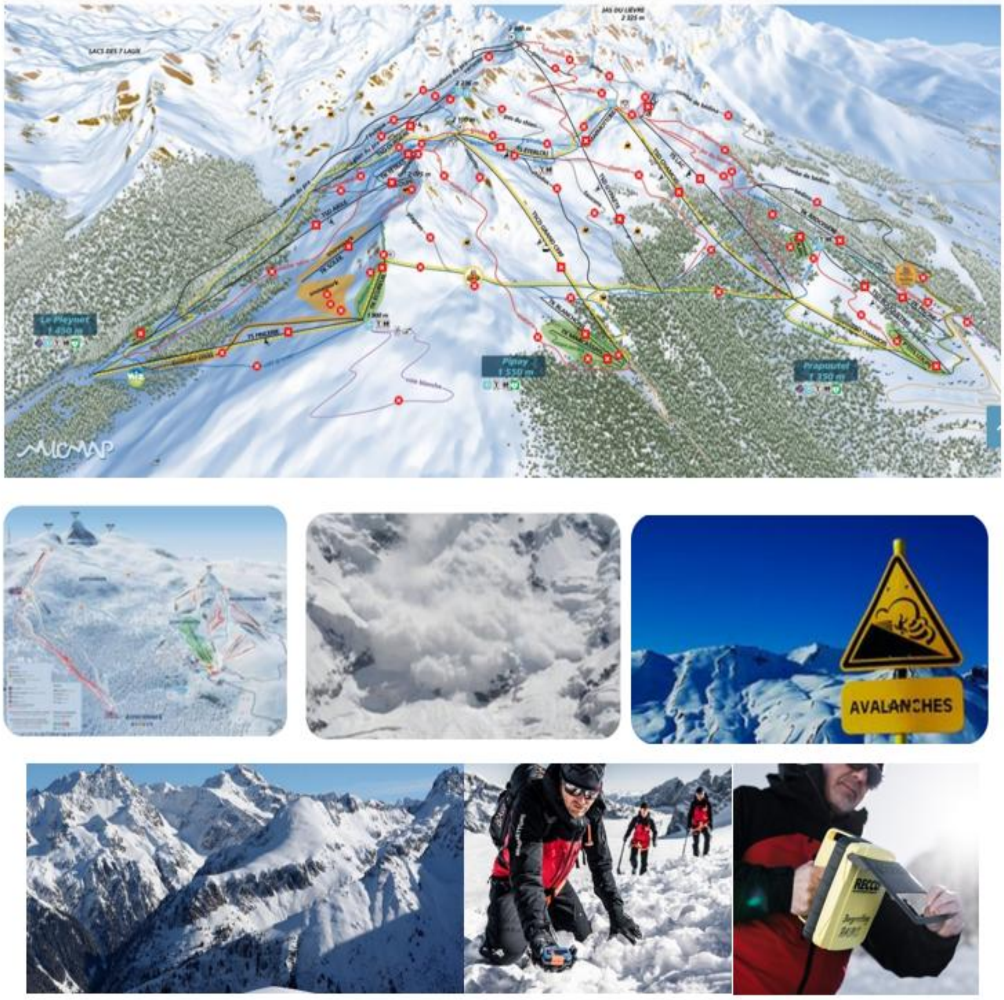
In the event of an avalanche, the transceiver worn by the skier is an essential item in conjunction with other equipment used for locating buried skiers. The detector, carried by the rescuer, emits a search beam that is reflected by RECCO® reflectors (RECCO) integrated into various types of clothing, helmets, ski boots, and other equipment. This enables the precise location of buried individuals. In a professional mountain rescue operation, the search for avalanche victims using an AVD (avalanche victim detector) is of the utmost importance. In the event that an AVD signal cannot be detected within the avalanche cone, the RECCO® detector is employed as an additional electronic search tool. In this manner, individuals who have become buried can be located with remarkable precision. The RECCO® detector can be utilized for searching both on the ground and from a helicopter.

The final phase of the Assistive System's operational cycle is dedicated to post-crisis management. The system is designed to undergo a process of reinitialization, which involves the appropriate reactivation of all system components and their in-environment elements (protections and transceivers) in order to prepare them for a new operational phase.

It should be noted, however, that a summer mountain crisis situation is not identical to the aforementioned scenario. The evolution from snow to water, from skiing to mountain biking and paragliding, may result in a change of customers, but the underlying needs remain the same.

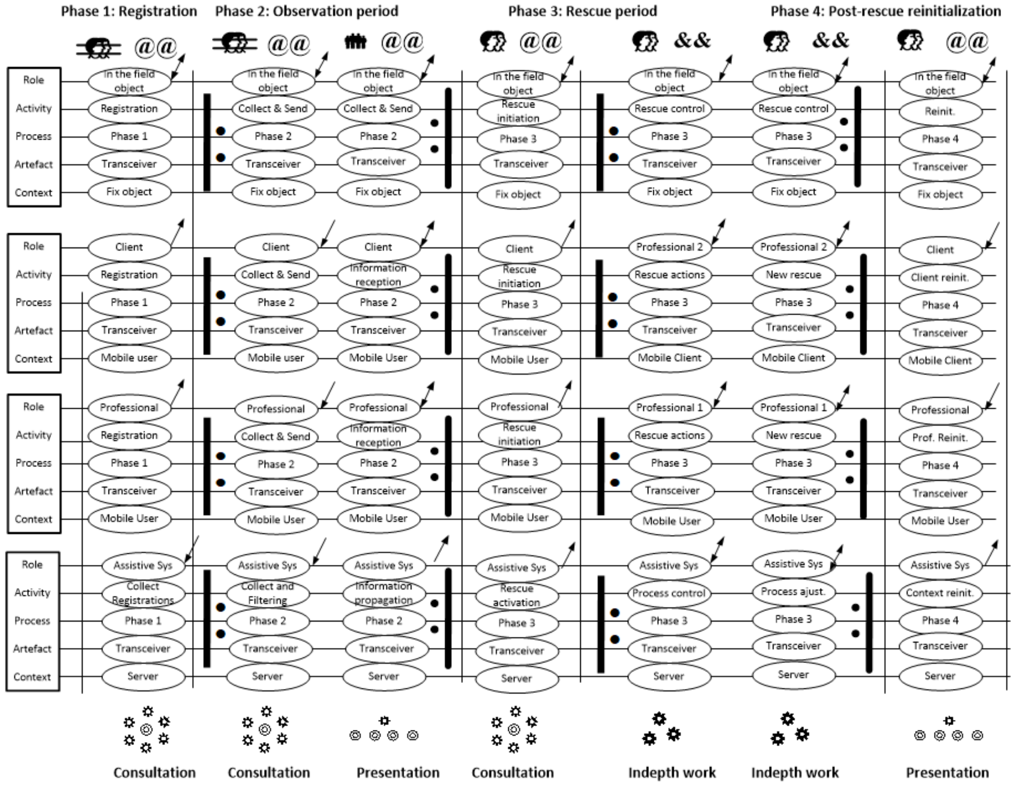
From the perspective of the design process, this final case can be considered a bottom-up approach, with the capacity of the environment serving as the primary source of information. It is evident that, should this preliminary stage prove unsatisfactory, it will be necessary to proceed by a more or less top-down approach in order to complete it.

Figure 11. *Ski Area Emergency and Rescue Services*



The in-gate limitation approach is relatively straightforward in terms of its working principles, collaboration, and modeling. In contrast, crisis management, with its various phases, is a more complex undertaking. A preliminary model is proposed for the first level of modeling with ORCHESTRA, as illustrated in Figure 12.

Figure 12. *ORCHESTRA (David et al. 2006) (David et al. 2007) modeling of Ski Area Emergency and Rescue Services*



Discussion

In order to address the issue of over-tourism, it is necessary to implement limitations on the number of tourists in a sensitive area. As described earlier (Access Control to Protected Areas) (Figure 10). This should apply to access to the station, as well as to the duration of their stay in hotels, flat rental, or resorts. In addition, it would be beneficial to implement environment gates with different parameters. At this time, no additional proposals have been put forth to address this issue. It is evident that more semantic solutions, such as the proposal of alternative destinations, are to be considered. However, it is not necessarily the case that technological improvements are required.

In the context of crisis management in the tourism sector, our proposal is based on a close relationship between smart tourism and smart environment. This approach takes into account the use of distributed transceivers that are able to observe and propagate the current situation. Consequently, our assistive system is capable of implementing appropriate actions or reactions and organizing rescue interventions.

Concerning sustainable tourism; we have not finalized proposition. As ICT specialists we are proposing different mechanisms, which can be used to take into account appropriate sustainable tourism characteristics presented previously, which can be retain by the designers.

Conclusions

This paper examines the digitalization and virtualization of operations related to tourism in the context of smart tourism in a smart environment. We presented the tourism needs, developments, and principal objectives to substantiate the need to provide all actors (consumers and providers) with suitable conditions that would permit the achievement of substantial results, particularly in two key areas: the avoidance of over-tourism and the management of tourism crises.

The main characteristics of the proposed assistive system, its actors, its architecture, and the design and development aspects were presented. A formalism called ORCHESTRA was presented in a cursory manner to illustrate its role in the modeling of work conditions. Five approaches to the construction and/or evolution of the system were presented in order to propose appropriate approaches which are needed in order to support the evolution of working conditions and users' and professionals' claims.

As demonstrated, total integration is not a solution. Conversely, an open-ended approach could be preferred in order to integrate new services that can be utilized on a daily basis and would communicate easily with existing ones. The modularized approach represents an appropriate solution.

In order to demonstrate the potential applications of our Assistive system in the context of over-tourism limitation and crisis management, we have compiled a list of several previously studied situations and provided a description of the system's functionality in a winter season setting at a mountain station. The objective was not to resolve all identified issues related to over-tourism and crisis management; rather, it was to provide a foundation for further studies and projects.

The next step in the evolution of this kind of assistive system is the integration of the Metaverse approach (Kouroupi and Metaxas 2023) (Koo et al. 2022) (Go 2022) (Yaqoob 2023), an approach to virtual and augmented reality that allows for an interesting and rich contextualization, as well as in-sofa sitting tourism. Its recent evolution from a purely virtual approach, which avoided over-tourism, to a more appropriate one that provided supplementary information through a 3D augmented reality interface, thus enhancing users' understanding of the places they visited. Another way to improve users' understanding of suggested destinations is through generative intelligence, a machine learning and deep learning-based approach inspired by ChatGPT and AI generative approach (Gursoy et al. 2023) (Hsu at al. 2024).

Acknowledgements

This paper was subjected to a quality control review by the IA writing tool Deepl.com Write tool, which was used to assess the English language proficiency.

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Privacy Concerns and Information Security in E-Tourism: Business and Information Management Perspective. The Case for Touring Companies in South Africa

By Nkosingiphile Trevor Mchunu[*]

The travel and tourism industry has, in recent years, been one of the fastest-growing industries that has been highly digitised. However, it has brought about the accumulation and storage of large volumes of consumer data that have become a matter of great concern in the context of privacy and security within the e-tourism system. The lack of adequate protection of this information by tourist companies has led to financial losses, legal liabilities, and several detrimental impacts on the company, including loss of customer confidence and a potential threat to the company's future existence. This paper aims to discuss the most important privacy and security threats that the e-tourism sector encounters. To do so, it uses the lenses of consumer behaviour, information management, and business strategy, thus incorporating insights from several disciplines. This paper is a qualitative literature review research. The study also aimed to identify practical measures implemented by e-tourism organisations to face these complex issues in practice. The research highlighted the benefits of using blockchain, biometrics, and privacy-aware technologies. These tools help secure data and manage third-party risks. They also build customer trust in e-tourism. The study identified key risks like data breaches and third-party vulnerabilities. It also noted growing customer concerns about data use and personalized strategies.

Keywords: *E-tourism, privacy, information security, data governance, cyber security, consumer trust.*

Introduction

In recent years, the development of IT technologies has affected the tourism sector and the way people travel and organise their trips. The availability of smartphone applications and accommodation-sharing programmes, combined with online travel booking sites, has enabled clients to make informed decisions like never before (Grigalashvili, 2022; Purwita & Subriadi, 2019). Also, the advancement in e-tourism has led to the gathering and safeguarding of vast amounts of consumers' data, including their financial information, travel experience, and personal information (Xiang et al., 2022). This is due to the fact that electronic tourism companies have to use this data to offer better services and differential pricing, hence the need to protect such information (Grigalashvili, 2023).

In the context of privacy and security, tourists and organisations that cater to their needs are exposed to numerous threats (Hamid et al., 2021). Consequences arising from data breaches and security failures in e-tourism enterprises are often

[*]Graduate Student, Durban University of Technology, South Africa.

severe. Furthermore, it can also lead to financial and legal risks and can also significantly damage the company's image. Hence, there are long-lasting negative effects that could accrue from consumer trust breakdown (Xiang et al., 2022). Customers are at risk of being vulnerable to identity theft, fraud, and unauthorised usage of their information. According to Lama et al. (2020), these hazards can severely affect people in their day-to-day lives, including their digital security and financial health. All the e-tourism business has to solve these complex issues as a matter of great and immediate importance.

Tourism specialists have emphasised the importance of having a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach to the issues associated with privacy and security in the context of digital tourism (Hamid et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2022). It is crucial to identify the problems that occur in the e-tourism area due to the fact that the effective management of information is critical for the formulation of strategic business decisions. Therefore, it is important to consider the various factors that may influence the e-tourism experience in the operational, technological and behavioural contexts (Lama et al., 2020; Mohammed et al., 2023). Thus, e-tourism enterprises need to build a proper balance of the possible usage of the client data for the improvement of the given services and the protection of the client's data (Pierdicca et al., 2019). The articulation of a legal framework for data management and the codification of measures for the security of data and rules for the use of data is to promote these requirements.

Complexity in the e-tourism information management problems is also a major factor. Some of the techs that are rising-face are (seamless integration of several data systems), risk management of third-party service providers and implementation of privacy-specific tech (Li et al., 2024). Consumers should be more protected in terms of personal data and give them more control over the information they share with e-tourism platforms. Additionally, they must ensure that security and compliance measures are strictly maintained throughout the entire value chain (Li et al., 2023). Innocence of these information security risks may result in system compromise, unauthorised access to data, and loss of consumers' confidence.

It is crucial to understand the relationship between the strategic management of organisations, information technology and consumer behaviour to ensure optimal management of privacy and security in e-tourism. This has been highlighted in the previous research works, which have been discussed earlier in this study (Hamid et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2022). In the modern world, employees in the tourism industry may create effective measures to protect crucial information of customers, minimise possible risks, and gain the trust of tourists. This can be done by merging the information from different fields of study (Grigalashvili, 2022; Grigalashvili, 2023).

With this in mind, this research work seeks to examine the threat to the privacy and security of the e-tourism sector with a especial focus on information and business management. The literature on potential threats within the e-tourism sector and the primary findings reveal the most substantial risks in the given area, methods to minimise the impact of risks, and the role of modern technologies in improving data security and privacy concerns. This study will be useful for legislators, tourism organisations, and other actors who seek information about and action on the link between digitisation, consumer trust, and data protection in the tourism industry.

Whilst the prior research has focused on the security and privacy concerns within e-tourism from distinct standpoints, there happens to be a lack of an approach which combines consumer behaviour, information management, and the concept of business strategy. The study seeks to address the gap mentioned above by providing a holistic framework to explore to interplay that exists between the factors mentioned above in a bid to shape security and privacy issues within the ecosystem of e-tourism. As a result of the range of insights emanating from various disciplines, the research aims to offer a clear understanding of the issues and provide practical suggestions which can help to guide the organisations in e-tourism, the consumers and the policymakers to navigate the digital landscape at the same time protecting trust and ensuring the protection of data. The study also highlights the potential of emerging technologies like biometrics and blockchain in a bid to address the impending issues contributing to a continued narrative to leverage innovation to improve security and privacy in the concept of e-tourism.

Research Objectives

- To explore the regulatory compliance and the data practices of online travel organisations in line with security and privacy.
- To determine the security concerns in mobile applications and travel websites.
- To apprehend the protective behaviours and privacy concerns of online travellers.
- To identify the best practices and technical solutions in enhancing security and privacy within e-tourism

Literature Review

Using the guidelines given by Cooper et al. (2018) and Randolph (2019), a systematic literature review was conducted by the researcher. In this process, an initial search, and the screening process included the identification of the appropriate peer-reviewed articles, industrial reports, journals, and literature which is related to security and privacy issues within the e-tourism industry. The studies which were chosen were reviewed to find the challenges, risks, and recommendations in line with the processes of the collection of data, its storage, and the management practices in the context of e-tourism.

Data Collection and Storage by e-tourism Companies

Sensitive Customer Information at Risk

So, due to advancements in technology, particularly in the field of tourism, there are numerous online resources and platforms to arrange a trip, transportation, accommodation and even certain applications. These platforms give consumers information and choices which they can only get from these platforms (Henama & Apleni, 2020; Pierdicca et al., 2019). This is the case because travellers are using the e-tourism channels to access information for tourism purposes, make bookings of travel products and services, and disclose personal details for travel. It encompasses their details such as their identification, contact information, booking and payment records, travel and tour information, and other information such as their passport numbers and information on the traveller's frequent flyer miles (Reverte & Luque, 2021; Xiang et al., 2022). Hence, the consumer data that e-tourism businesses gather to enhance their services, prices and promotions that are sent to consumers is vital in the current digital economy setting (Li et al., 2023; Reverte & Luque, 2021).

According to Al-Saad and Gharaibeh (2023), e-tourism companies posed a threat to consumers' privacy and data when they acquired and archived information from them. Chauhan and Singh (2020) observed that through hacking, data breaches, or any other security incident, the personal data of the traveller may be compromised. This can lead to consumers losing their identities, having their money misused and other negative consequences that can affect the consumers. Moreover, the effects that such incidents have on the business's reputation and the legal implications that are associated with such incidences are likely to cause damage to the trust that is at the center of the e-tourism environment and therefore harm the business.

For example, a number of e-tourism businesses have had challenges with the most appropriate ways of exploiting the customer's data in order to improve the customer's experiences while at the same ensuring that the customer's data is well protected from theft or misuse (Abdullahi et al., 2021). That is despite the fact that these privacy and security issues are critical. Due to poor data management and protection, the use of outdated security measures, and the lack of transparency in the way data is collected and used, travellers have been exposed, and this has led to their loss of confidence in online services for tourism (Reverte & Luque, 2021). Having identified these core challenges in the area of privacy and security of e-tourism, other stakeholders in the tourism industry, policymakers and other stakeholders have been forced to focus on these challenges as the environment for e-tourism continues to develop.

Potential Consequences of Data Breaches and Security Failures

According to Xiang et al. (2022) and Li et al. (2023), the vulnerability of the tourism industry to data breaches, cyberattacks, and other security failures, given the growing use of e-tourism platforms and dependence on technology. When such cases arise, the consequences can be dire as they will affect not only the tourism enterprises but the clients of these enterprises as well (Lama et al., 2020). As identified by Xiang et al. (2022) and Li et al. (2023), sanctions, legal consequences, and the costs of mitigation measures can burden or even harm an organisation financially. The decline in consumer trust results in a loss of market share, low customer retention, and a decline in the image of the brand. In severe cases, special security breaches have led to the shutdown of tourism companies as a consequence of their failure. This is because the affected firms' clients have switched their allegiance to more credible competitors (Al-Saad & Gharaibeh, 2023; Reverte & Luque, 2021).

However, besides the direct influence these have on enterprises which are involved in tourism, data breaches and security incidents that occur in the scope of e-tourism also pose certain threats to individual tourists. Cybercrimes like identity theft, financial fraud, and other related issues can greatly affect the consumer for a long time (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Xiang et al., 2022). These crimes can happen when information that is personal and sensitive is revealed, including names, contact information, and payment card details, as well as passport information. The victims are struggling to reclaim control over their data and protect their online identity from further harm, and such cases can be psychologically and economically detrimental (Al-Saad & Gharaibeh, 2023; Hamid et al., 2021). It is also crucial to consider the financial aspect, which may also be an issue at times.

There has been significant concern about the use of consumer data within the e-tourism ecosystem and the possibility of abuse, which is a concern of privacy and data ethics (Lama et al., 2020; Reverte & Luque, 2021). Among the emerging challenges in the application of advanced analytics and personalisation algorithms in tourism businesses to deliver individual experiences, there are concerns that travellers' data is being tracked, profiled and monetised wrongly. These practices can be considered unethical and may result in violating the rights of individuals to privacy and also lose the confidence of consumers in the tourism industry (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Al-Saad & Gharaibeh, 2023). In the sphere of the e-tourism business, those numerous and complex problems have been identified and appear to be extremely essential for solving. This requires a comprehensive and cross-disciplinary approach and a careful balance between the opportunities offered by digitisation and the efforts to protect the privacy and security of clients.

Complex Tourism Supply Chains and Third-Party Risks

Distributed Data Systems and Access Control Challenges

This paper will, therefore, seek to paint a picture of the tourism business by understanding its structure, which has a complex and much-divided supply chain. These services are airlines, hotels, tour operators, travel agents and others to come up with a travel product (O'Connor, 2020). For the same reason that e-tourism platforms collect and exchange information with other third parties to provide consumers with a seamless process of booking and planning their trip, this ecosystem has become even more integrated in the digital age.

This distributed and integrated system of providing tourism services seems to have favoured the travellers in terms of time and specificity of service delivery but has posed some challenges of privacy and security that are quite complicated for the small e-tourism businesses to solve on their own (Reverte & Luque, 2021). It is a large tourism supply chain, and each supplier in this chain has its own way of managing and storing data, implementing security measures, and meeting standards (Cha et al., 2018). These providers usually acquire, store, and transmit information concerning the travellers, including their payment information. Suitable measures that include proper access control, secure handling of data transfer, and proper third-party management must be adopted to ensure adequate protection of such information in a fragmented and decentralised environment.

However, there are hundreds of thousands of tourism service providers, from large complex organisations to very small sensitive organisations and that is why the issue of the security situation becomes even more complex. This is because the threats and vulnerabilities that are present in one partner's systems can spread to the other partner's systems and the entire e-tourism value chain and make it prone to risks and attacks (Lama et al., 2020). This means that the entire value chain is threatened, and the information of travellers can be compromised since each of the players in the tourism industry has weak cyber security measures, outdated software and poor access control systems, as seen among the smaller players in the value chain (Li et al., 2023).

Ensuring End-to-end Security and Compliance

Due to the increased coupling and the interdependencies of the e-tourism ecosystem on third-party services, the issue of offering a holistic, end-to-end security and compliance solution has become critical for organisations operating in the tourism sector (Hamid et al., 2021). However, attaining this level of comprehensive security and compliance is complicated because it implies integrating a number of actors whose data management systems, security measures and compliance policies are different. This is done so as to ensure that customer information is well protected and that there are no lapses in the protection of such information (Hamid et al., 2021). To avoid these risks, businesses that engage in e-tourism must ensure that they carry out thorough background checks on their third-party partners. This involves evaluating their standard security measures, management of cybersecurity incidents, and adherence to the law (Abdullahi et al., 2021). Furthermore, they are mandated to put in place clear contractual obligations that define the roles of the suppliers, service level agreements as well as ways to conduct ongoing monitoring so that the suppliers can be held to account and to ensure that there is continual oversight of the entire tourist system (Purwita & Subriadi, 2019).

Due to this, e-tourism companies face challenges in the process of identifying compliance needs within the security legal framework. This is because there is a need for them to meet their business operations and financial needs as well as the need to safeguard consumer information (Lin et al., 2020). As seen in the examples of data breaches, privacy violations, and regulatory non-compliance, the consequences include fines, customers 'switching to competitors, and trust loss, which are detrimental to the company's long-term performance (Hamid et al., 2021). Non-compliance with these regulations poses serious legal and reputational risks to these businesses and can lead to legal and reputational damages. To meet these challenges, it is thus essential for tourist businesses to be able to manage end-to-end security and compliance effectively in the context of the complex and increasingly interconnected digital environment. The e-tourism industry is still growing and developing (Lama et al., 2020).

Traveler Privacy Concerns and Expectations

Worries about Personal Data Usage and Profiling

Technological advancements such as e-tourism platforms, mobile applications, and other digital interfaces have enhanced the experience of travellers because they have access to more information and choices. While e-tourism firms are leveraging big data, artificial intelligence, and other targeted marketing approaches to offer enhanced individualised experiences, consumers are becoming more sensitive to the potential risks of being monitored, profiled, and exploited by firms that engage in data tracking and profiling (Chauhan & Singh, 2020; Purwita & Subriadi, 2019).

While using the services of e-tourism providers, travellers often have to surrender rather sensitive information such as their names and contact information, payment information, travelling preferences and even location data (Xiang et al., 2022). Hamid et al. (2021) note that the unauthorised access, misuse, or sale of this personal data may lead to the occurrence of the following unfortunate events. Some of the activities are financial fraud, identity theft, target advertising, and invasive surveillance operations. There are growing worries about the impact on personal freedom and the violation of basic privacy rights as these data could be used to build comprehensive profiles of individual travellers' travelling patterns, preferences, and movements (Abdullahi et al., 2021).

Therefore, the majority of travellers have become rather cautious when it comes to e-tourism platforms because they are not quite sure about the possible risks of sharing their information with digital service providers (Li et al., 2024). This is because they are always afraid of what might happen if they are unable to get their information back. The decline of consumer confidence is an authentic issue that can affect the tourism industry (Li et al., 2023; Purwita & Subriadi, 2019). This is due to the fact that travellers may choose not to use the e-tourism services which offer ease and individual attention in favour of conventional offline methods of booking. Alternatively, they may decide not to travel at all to ensure that they do not expose themselves to the public and give away their information. Businesses that are into e-tourism have, therefore, had to grapple with the increasing concern that travellers have about the safety and use of their information. This calls for a comprehensive strategy that is informed by the benefits of personalisation while, at the same time, working to safeguard the rights of people.

Balancing Privacy with Personalised Services

Thanks to e-tourism, tourism businesses are capable of using a large amount of data about customers to offer them more individual attention and better services, variable pricing, and advertising. These aspects are vital in maintaining market competitiveness in the digital age (Clarke, 2021; Miao et al., 2019). As stated by Reverte and Luque (2021), e-tourism platforms can adjust the experience based on users' search histories, bookings, and preferences. This also helps the platforms to be able to make recommendations, offers, and bookings to the passengers, thus making them satisfied and loyal to the platforms.

As stated by Abdullahi et al. (2021), the enhanced level of personalisation comes at the cost of customer data collection, storage, and analysis, which is rather sensitive. This collection, storage and analysis of customers' data have generated much concern among many travellers with regard to their privacy. People gradually realise that their information, including their name, contacts, financial details, and travel history, may be misused, mishandled, or shared without their consent (Lama et al., 2020; Li et al., 2024).

Thus, due to this erosion of trust, the users may decide not to use the services of the digital platforms at all, or at least not to book their travels through these platforms and turn to the more traditional off-line ways of booking and travelling, which may also mean not travelling at all (Gong & Schroeder, 2022). This can have severe consequences for the companies that are engaged in the e-tourism business. E-tourism, like any other online platform, faces the challenge of achieving the right balance between the righteous use of personalisation and respect for user privacy (Clarke, 2021). As suggested by Li et al. (2024), companies in the tourism sector must come up with strategies for the use of customer data that enhance the user experience and yet can guarantee the privacy of the individual and hence gain customer confidence.

As cited by Li et al. (2023) and Purwita and Subriadi (2019), some measures could be data management policies, privacy policies and simple means through which passengers can control data capture and usage. Moreover, tools like differential privacy and data anonymisation can help e-tourism companies offer services that are relevant to specific consumers without the danger of divulging their information (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Hamid et al., 2021). Thus, it will allow us to avoid the usage of data-driven personalisation for the e-tourism companies' aims in a way that can be unethical and can violate the customer's privacy rights. This is a critical assumption in the attainment of the long-term objectives of the industry and its prospects.

Methodology

Research Approach and Data Collection Methods

This study was founded in the systematic literature review as a significant possibility of summarizing the existing knowledge about the aspects of privacy and security of tourism and electronic tourism. Data collection and data materials in this research were developed according to the guidelines of Randolph (2019). It included several crucial steps.

An initial search in the Google Scholar database was run with terms such as 'privacy AND security AND e-tourism', 'data protection and online travel' and 'cybersecurity and travel websites'. The result was a search that brought up a significant amount of potentially relevant publications. Under the heading of filtering and appraisal, only the peer-reviewed and English-language published articles within the 2015-2023 period were regarded for further consideration by the researcher (Cooper et al., 2018). In addition, the abstracts and titles were assessed and reviewed in a bid to exclude the research within which security, privacy, and the protection of data concerns of the online travel providers or visitors were not addressed explicitly.

After rigorous, careful assessment, a final set of 67 highly relevant publications was retrieved. In order to avoid missing any other relevant works that the original searches might not capture, we rigorously conducted backward snowballing using the reference lists of the 67 publications, as suggested by Snyder (2019). Furthermore, some of the white papers, industry reports and other grey literature coming from authoritative sources were also provided to understand actual applications in real-world contexts. The introduction of these supplementary sources increased the value of academic literature, for the documents helped to examine actual problems in privacy and security faced by e-tourism organisations and the tactics they used to prevent such threats (Paul & Criado, 2020).

Analytical Framework for Examining Privacy and Security in e-tourism

As argued by Paul and Criado (2020), the literature review approach allows for the construction of a theoretical framework that is multi-disciplinary for an understanding of security and privacy within the e-tourism sector. Such a framework draws upon perspectives in the disciplines of consumer behaviour, marketing, information systems and strategic management. The research concept and techniques followed the highest standards recommended both by academic literature and by industry.

From a strategic management perspective, the framework attempts to research how e-tourism organisations can benefit consumers' data by offering them personalized services and, at the same time, increasing their operational efficiency, data management, protection, and regulation compliance. It assesses the lack of well-defined policies for preventing data breaches and security infractions. The information management component of e-tourism systems leads to technological and operational issues, which relate to data integration problems, risks of using a third-party service provider, and approaches to improving data privacy.

This paradigm examines the methods by which e-tourism platforms might establish and enforce policies while still enabling consumer privacy and control. The consumer behaviour element examines the apprehensions of individuals who use the internet for travel purposes regarding the protection of their personal information and the level of security provided. It delves into their willingness to disclose personal information and trade-off of privacy for better services. Wong (2020) looks at consumer trust issues in e-commerce tourism platforms, the impact of privacy and security breaches on tourist behaviour, and the strategies to enhance consumer data privacy.

The research developed a broad, cross-disciplinary theoretical framework, applying diverse perspectives from corporate strategy, information management, and consumer behaviour better to understand the complex e-tourism environment of privacy and security. In particular, by synthesising previous research findings, this study provided practical and valuable implications and recommendations for many tourism stakeholders, including managers, IT professionals, legislators, and customers.

Central to this framework are three key constructs. The first is consumer behavior, which focuses on travelers' privacy concerns and their impact on trust and decision-making. Research highlights the privacy-personalization paradox, where consumers desire tailored experiences but fear data misuse (Clarke, 2021; Abdullahi et al., 2021). Understanding this trade-off is essential for analyzing consumer trust dynamics in e-tourism. The second construct, information management, examines operational and technological challenges, such as data governance and third-party risks. Effective data security practices, including encryption and anonymization, are critical to safeguarding consumer information and maintaining compliance with regulatory frameworks like GDPR (Li et al., 2023; Xiang et al., 2022). The third construct, business strategy, addresses how organizations balance operational efficiency with ethical data practices. This involves leveraging data responsibly to enhance personalization while adhering to privacy standards to retain customer confidence (Grigalashvili, 2022).

The theoretical foundation builds on existing theories to inform the study's analysis. The privacy-personalization paradox offers insights into consumer preferences and hesitations in sharing personal data. Information management frameworks provide tools for analyzing data protection strategies, including end-to-end encryption and third-party audits, which are vital in the interconnected e-tourism value chain (Hamid et al., 2021). Business strategy theories, such as strategic resource management, evaluate how firms optimize data use to enhance service delivery without compromising trust (Li et al., 2023). These theories are particularly relevant in addressing challenges unique to e-tourism, such as fragmented supply chains and varied compliance standards across regions.

This study adopts an integrative theoretical lens, combining insights from the aforementioned frameworks to provide a robust approach to the research problem. The integration of these theories ensures that consumer concerns, organizational practices, and strategic imperatives are analyzed holistically. This alignment supports the study's goal of offering practical, interdisciplinary solutions to privacy and security challenges in e-tourism.

The application of this framework informs the research methodology by aligning theoretical constructs with the study's qualitative approach. For instance, consumer behavior insights guide the exploration of traveler privacy concerns, while information management theories inform the evaluation of organizational practices and technological solutions. Business strategy concepts underpin the analysis of how e-tourism firms implement privacy-focused strategies to maintain trust. This framework contributes to theoretical advancement by contextualizing established concepts within the e-tourism sector. By integrating these perspectives, the study addresses gaps in understanding how privacy and security issues intersect with operational and strategic priorities.

Findings

Theme 1: Regulatory Compliance and Data Practices

This can be seen in the modern world, especially in e-tourism, where businesses in the tourism sector have adopted the use of digital technologies and data analysis for personalisation and, therefore, face the challenge of privacy and data protection (Wong, 2020). If companies share the customers' information and it is not protected, they could face financial, legal and reputational risks, such as loss of the customer, which damages the future of the company (Grigalashvili, 2023).

Data Governance and Security Best Practices for e-tourism Firms

Robust Access Controls and Authentication

To reduce the likelihood of data leakage or misuse by clients, e-tourism companies should take strict measures in access control and the use of proper authentication (Wong, 2020). This involves the use of two or more factors, including passwords and biometric identification, as a way of validating users in order to access important information or perform important business activities (Xiang et al., 2022). However, e-tourism companies should also adhere to the principle of least privileging, which entails that the employee and third-party service providers should be given only the level of access necessary to perform their tasks. It is also crucial to examine these permissions from time to time and alter them in accordance with the organisation’s needs and security policies whenever it is necessary (Hamid et al., 2021).

The processes of encryption, anonymisation, and data minimisation. Apart from access control, e-tourism firms have to ensure proper protection of data in order to safeguard the information that customers provide during business (Abdullahi et al., 2021). This means that encryption will be employed to guarantee that client data is not easily copied and used by unauthorised individuals during transmission and storage, and in the event that the data is exposed, it will be in an encrypted format that cannot be easily decrypted by anyone (Mohammed et al., 2023).

Besides encryption, other precautions that can be recommended for e-tourism organisations to strengthen consumer privacy protection are data anonymisation and data minimisation (Abdullahi et al., 2021). The information gathered from the customers can be useful to the business in its activities, but at the same time, the privacy of the customers must be preserved by deleting their information from the data set, as stated by Wong (2020). Other measures that should be put in place include data minimisation, where only information that is relevant to business activities should be collected and stored from customers to avoid data breaches and cyber-attacks (Hamid et al., 2021).

Incident Response and Breach Notification Protocols

Apart from implementing adequate measures for security, e-tourism firms should anticipate and be prepared to encounter data breaches or security incidents, as noted by Wong (2020). First, firms must establish proper incident response plans to allow them to detect, analyse, and respond to security breaches in the most appropriate and timely manner. This will help minimise the negative effects that may be experienced by the customers or the organisation (Abdullahi et al., 2021).

These incident response plans should outline the steps that should be taken to communicate the occurrence of a breach to the customers, regulatory authorities and other stakeholders. This increases the following of the code of ethics and other data protection laws and guidelines that are currently being used (Abdullahi et al., 2021). Furthermore, e-tourism businesses should periodically assess and modify their incident response plans. This should involve the incorporation of data from past occurrences as well as updating the current forms of threats. It can, therefore, assist in helping them build up their readiness to handle any other disasters that may occur in the future (Hamid et al., 2021).

Managing Third-party Risks in the Tourism Ecosystem

Vendor due Diligence and Security Assessments

Unfortunately, as e-tourism businesses have become more dependent on third-party service providers to deliver the products and services that they offer. It is imperative to address the concerns that may arise in the relationship with such entities (Xiang et al., 2022). Therefore, such examination, supervision, and control of these partnerships are called for.

These are the risks associated with third-party integration, and as such, e-tourism companies should ensure that they develop appropriate measures to ensure effective vendor selection and assessment of their security standards, as proposed by Lama et al. (2020). It is proposed to establish the existing cybersecurity level in the company, the possibility of dealing with incidents, the compliance with the legal framework before signing any contract's terms with any suppliers or companies engaged in business (Hamid et al., 2021). Similarly, the e-tourism companies should also assess from time to time the security that the current third-party partners present. This should include regularly checking and scanning, for example, auditing and pen testing, to check that these providers are still secure to use in the organisation (Wong, 2020).

Contractual Obligations and Service-level Agreements

In addition to the above steps, the identification of suitable contractual terms and SLAs between e-tourism companies and their third-party service providers can help in establishing a comprehensive strategy that ensures customer information security at every level of the supply chain (O'Connor, 2020). It should be clear from the provisions of the contract the kind of security measures that are expected, how incidents are to be handled and what actions are to be taken when there is a breach. However, they should also outline the roles of the e-tourism business and its third-party contractors in information protection (Lama et al., 2020).

With such contractual terms and service level agreements that have an emphasis on security, e-tourism companies are able to ensure that the third-party vendors are compelled to safeguard the data of the customers. This makes sure all the people involved understand the importance of safeguarding both the company and its consumers against any form of vices (Miao et al., 2019). Also, these contractual agreements can help the e-tourism businesses to set up certain measures and guidelines that have to be followed; any violation of which attracts legal consequences and also enables the e-tourism businesses to stop cooperation with third-party partners who may not meet the required standard of data protection as stated by (Cha et al., 2018).

Continuous Monitoring and Auditing of Third Parties

Apart from the initial check and legal requirements of the contract and agreement, e-tourism enterprises need to maintain continuous monitoring and auditing procedures to ensure that their third-party service providers will adhere to the necessary security and compliance standards in the future (Clarke, 2021). This involves checking on the security levels of these external partners, conducting periodic vulnerability assessments on their data protection practices, and looking out

This paper also notes that through the use of automated monitoring tools as well as security information and event management systems, there is a high possibility of enhancing the ability of the e-tourism enterprise to detect and respond to third-party security incidents in real time. This makes it easier to prevent harm and address legal issues arising from contracts and agreements and other legal relationships (Chauhan & Singh, 2020). Furthermore, e-tourism companies should also have clear steps for escalation and incident handling in case security issues are noticed in the e-tourism products and services. They should also be able to cut or alter relationships with third-party suppliers if they do not meet the required security level (Verhegghe, 2018).

Enhancing Customer Trust through Transparency and Control

Clear Data Privacy Policies and user Control Mechanisms

Besides enhancing internal data management and control and addressing risks related to third parties, e-tourism companies need to address the problem of trust in the eyes of their customers. This can be done by expanding the information on how data is utilised and permitting the consumers to have more control over their data (Sifolo & Henama, 2023). The first step is to develop simple-to-understand policies that define how the e-tourism company collects, stores and uses customers' information to prevent misuse as well as the safety measures put in place to protect the data (Verhegghe, 2018). It should outline the types of data that will be collected, the reason for collecting such data, and the measures that customers can take to access, correct or delete their personal information (Miao et al., 2019).

In addition, it is argued that the customers of e-tourism businesses must be able to exercise control over their data and the data that is being collected and used by e-tourism businesses by having the ability to select the data they want to share, the ability to In this way, e-tourism companies can ensure travellers’ privacy and, therefore, gain their trust as well as distinguish themselves from the other companies in the highly competitive market.

Ethical Data Usage and Privacy-enhancing Technologies

Therefore, it becomes crucial that the e-tourism firms pay attention to the ethical use of data and try to adopt new techniques that would help increase the privacy of customers and, thus, increase the level of trust that the customers have in the system and support transparency. This will include observing the principles of data protection such as data minimisation whereby the only data that would be collected and stored from the customers would be the necessary one. It also encompasses ensuring that one does not engage in irresponsible or malicious use of data, including spying, tracking, or profiling of individuals or advertising (Clarke, 2021).

In addition, it is suggested that e-tourism companies should also consider employing advanced privacy-preserving measures, which include differential privacy, homomorphic encryption and secure multi-party computation. These strategies enable the organisation to get information from the customer data without infringing on the rights of the customers (Verhegghe, 2018). Therefore, with the integration of these modern technologies, e-tourism businesses will be in a better position to practice ethical data management, recover customers' confidence, and set an example for other organisations in the correct utilisation of consumers' data (Cha et al., 2018).

Theme 2: The Security Concerns, Challenges and Emerging Solutions

The e-tourism sector has several crucial vulnerabilities in data protection and information security aspects (Clarke, 2021). In this regard, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of promoting the efficient use of technology to protect the customers' information, which will lead to the travellers' trust (Law & Chen, 2024). Some of the latest technologies, such as blockchain-based secure data sharing, biometric authentication, and privacy-preserving analytics, can be a powerful tool for e-tourism companies to overcome the challenges of security and privacy threats that are increasingly common in the digital world.

Blockchain is used for Secure Data sharing and Transaction Tracking

In this context, the distributed, decentralised architecture of blockchain technologies could be used to overcome the challenges related to data management and third-party risks within the e-tourism environment (Law & Chen, 2024). By tapping on the inherent features of blockchain, such as cryptographic data protection, irreversible transaction recordings, and consensus mechanisms, e-tourism

In the context of e-tourism, the most important application of blockchain technology is the secure exchange of client data, travel history, and booking transactions between the members of the decentralised network of tourism service providers. Furthermore, these systems provide a tamper-proof and immutable log of these interactions, which enhances their credibility (Paraskevas, 2022). This openness and accountability that has been realised and enhanced within the e-tourism industry can help not only in the early detection of security breaches but also in the identification of third-party partners who mishandle data (Vila et al., 2021).

Furthermore, the integration of blockchain technology and smart contracts can help in optimising compliance with contractual clauses and service level agreements that are focused on security and, thus, ensure that data protection laws are consistently applied across the entire e-tourism supply chain (O'Connor, 2020). Applying this approach, the process of managing risks related to third parties can be improved, the burden of compliance checking can be reduced and, thus, the confidence of e-tourism companies in their ability to protect the customers' data from all the partners in the ecosystem can be increased (Wong, 2020).

Biometrics for Robust Authentication and Access Control

In the e-tourism industry, biometric authentication technology and blockchain can enhance the security and privacy of customers (Xiang et al., 2022). Biometrics has embraced the use of unique physiological or behavioural characteristics such as fingerprint, face, and voice,, among others, to provide enhanced security and ease of identification as compared to conventional methods of using passwords. This technology assists in preventing the intrusions of unauthorised access to the customer data and the important e-tourism applications hence improving the aspect of security and privacy (Al-Saad & Gharaibeh, 2023).

Biometric identifiers cannot be easily forgotten or easily cracked compared to passwords, which may be easily guessed or shared. This makes biometric identifiers a viable option in protecting e-tourism businesses from traditional threats that include credential stuffing, phishing, and social engineering (Mohammed et al., 2023). Moreover, the biometrics may also be implemented alongside other forms of access control, such as multi-factor authentication and role-based access control, in order to give a more robust

Biometric technologies play a role in protecting e-tourism-related financial transactions alongside access control. The technologies assist travellers in confirming their identity when making payments or bookings through biometrics that are unique and unalterable to the individual (Reverte & Luque, 2021). This can, in turn, lead to increased customer satisfaction by enhancing the overall shopping experience and can also assist in reducing incidences of fraud and identity theft, a major issue of concern to consumers which may negatively affect the e-tourism websites (Grigalashvili, 2022).

Differential Privacy and other Privacy-enhancing Techniques

Differential privacy is a mathematical construct which allows for the sharing or utilisation of data while safeguarding the secrecy of the sensitive details that may be inferred from the data (Cha et al., 2018; Stadler et al., 2020). For instance, differential privacy mechanisms apply a fixed noise to the data and have a mathematical guarantee that it is impossible to couple the result of an analysis with an individual in the dataset. This protection remains active even when the level of difficulty is augmented by the selection of the opponent and background knowledge (Purwita & Subriadi, 2019). In e-tourism, it is crucial to implement the notion of privacy segmentation. From the above literature, it is evident that through consumer data analysis for personalisation and other purposes, business value can be created without violating the privacy of the travellers.

However, there are other possible technological solutions that e-tourism businesses should also consider as another method of safeguarding privacy; such as homomorphic encryption and Secure Multiparty Computation. This can also assist with improving the safeguarding of customer data while at the same time increasing the ease of access and value of the data (Miao et al., 2019; Stadler et al., 2020). When applied in e-tourism companies, such solutions enable the companies to show that they are concerned with the protection of consumers' data, and, therefore, the consumers will trust the companies and also set the bar for the proper handling of consumers' information (Stadler et al., 2020).

Some of the recent technologies that can also assist e-tourism organisations in combating the problems of data privacy and information security include blockchain, biometrics and privacy-preserving analytics (Miao et al., 2019). Therefore, the residents in this sector will be in a position to protect the data of their clients, prevent adverse incidents that may occur due to the involvement of other parties and, in the process, gain the trust of the tourists. These factors are very crucial for the e-tourism industry in order to manage and find ways to cope with the challenges which are present in the digital environment in order to make the industry sustainable and highly profitable in the future (Cha et al., 2018).

Theme 3: Traveler Privacy Concerns and Protective Behaviors

Key Privacy Concerns of Online Travelers

Many privacy threats for tourists in online interaction have also been detected by previous research, including unauthorised secondary application and mismanagement of personal data beyond what was declared; unauthorised access of sensitive data by third parties; mistakes in data collection and data oblivion that might lead to stress; and external data breach leading to identity theft as well as financial fraud (Abdullahi et al., 2021; Gong & Schroeder, 2022). Other notable research concerns disclosed travel information (dates, locations, and home address, among others which represents a safety issue when in the hands of criminals, traveller profiling for targeted advertising as invasive, and the sharing (lack of control and not knowing how the personal data is being used) of personal data with third-party affiliates (Paraskevas, 2022). Studies shown in interactive surveys highlight how IoT-enabled smart hotels (Berndt, 2022) are producing privacy leakages. In airline mobile apps, while the flight is on, real-time location and biometric data are also processed to show the location. Some new emerging technologies like VR, which can capture behavioural data, cost this privacy risk higher (Reverte & Luque, 2021).

Impact of Privacy Concerns on Traveler Behaviour

A high privacy concern might have a negative effect on the travellers' intention to perform online transactions, provide personal information and download mobile applications while going through the travel booking process (Vila et al., 2021). These concerns, especially around the risk of a potential impact, say from identity theft or data misuse, can be why an intended purchase is never made. When engaged in identity disclosure, the privacy and scam-threatened travellers intent to give up information or adopt completely new identities to conceal their private aspects, leading to incomplete information, false identification, or simply disappearing travellers instantly after putting data on the screen, undeniably affecting travel companies' conversions (Wong, 2020). The lack of explicit privacy guarantees on travel websites increases distrust and drop-off. As explained by Lin et al. (2020), travellers also appraise a site as untrustworthy when what they believe is an excessive amount of information is being collected, but they are not gaining equivalent value, such as being cautious about providing financial details.

Traveller Coping Strategies and Protective Behaviors

Research indicates that those who care about their privacy when they go online take precautions in terms of technology use, such as only using their browsers' privacy settings, checking if web pages are SSL encrypted, and putting on ad blockers, among others, including flight trackers so that they can have a say on many things while surfing (Law & Chen, 2024). Further, measures to be taken are to use anonymous browsing or partially or even wrongly completed personal details to escape identification and to avoid visiting travel websites and applications with excessive or extensive data gathering. Non-technical coping behaviours may include greater use of relatively privacy-preserving traditional offline booking channels or segmenting the information shared between different parts of the same travel website to avoid extensive profiles being built up (Mohammed et al., 2023). Survey results also suggest that the travellers are unaware of existing tools and have difficulties understanding the long privacy policies, which shows a gap in the privacy provisions currently enforced.

Theme 4: Solutions and Best Practices for Privacy and Security

Regulatory Compliance and Data Governance Frameworks

Various regulations and frameworks are needed to promote consumer confidence and ensure proper, ethical, and secure treatment and management of the traveller data with consent requirements for collection/processing, the limitation of storage duration, and control of secondary usage (Al-Saad & Gharaibeh, 2023). Necessary regulations include the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), the California Consumer Privacy Act (CCPA) and sector-specific data protection regulations for travel industry providers that entail restrictive opt-in mandates, mandatory breach disclosures, and heavy penalties for non-compliance. In a non-profit manner at the global level, the Travel Technology Data Governance Framework, for instance, offers certification for organisations following very high data privacy standards in respect of their use of data of customers by adhering to principles of integrity, necessity and access security (Henama & Apleni, 2020). Internal governance policies covering purpose limitation, retention schedules, access rights, and training can effectively manage privacy risks to empowerment.

Privacy-Enhancing Technologies and Cybersecurity Measures

Effective encryption techniques are used in stored travel data as well as transmission conduits to prevent unauthorized persons from accessing the information; thereby, personal privacy is maintained. Other emerging technologies include the use of tokenisation; hence, cardholders' sensitive payment card credentials are concealed while making a purchase online (Li et al., 2023). Other solutions encompass blockchain- based decentralized credential management, eliminating single-point security risks (Abdullahi et al., 2021). Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML) models also allow predictive analysis to identify abnormal activities and automated threat responses. Privacy and federated analysis are examples of privacy-protecting technologies adding safety nets compared with simply identify-unlinking information extraction for data analysis. Additional cybersecurity measures can include preventing access control, auditing and penetration testing, secure coding in software development and ensuring that employees are well-trained in security awareness (Henama & Apleni, 2020).

Building Consumer Trust through Transparency and Control

Thus, it is imperative to adopt GDPR-enhanced strategies to enhance consumer trust and mitigate privacy issues within the travel industry. This translates to providing information on data collection and use, securing consent when the case applies for processing, and granting users the right to his/her data on e-platforms, such as to access and correct such data (O'Connor, 2020). Furthermore, designing the privacy control panels for visibility of the parts in the use of data and the guidance for making the preferences on non-essential tracking to promote the self-regulation ways of data sharing with checkups and licenses could be useful for travellers (Wong, 2020). From the researched literature, therefore, it emerges that when people feel that they satisfy the characteristics of open information and have at least some degree of control over the information they input, they are able to choose that information as well as the trust to be placed in platforms.

Conclusion

The progress of the tourism sector has greatly improved the ways through which tourists plan their travel, identify the services they require, and how they navigate through the use of technological applications to get information and services. However, the shift to e-tourism has created a scenario where large amounts of clients' data are collected and stored, thus posing a threat to their privacy and security. The threats that exist in the e-tourism environment include breach of data, system failure and IP theft, and access of unauthorised persons to consumer data, which results in financial and non-financial losses, legal consequences, and business risks for organisations in the tourism industry. In addition, the structure of the supply chain of tourism, which includes several interconnected sub-chains and involves many third-party suppliers connected to the same information systems, has stimulated the emergence of new threats and risks that e-tourism companies should combat.

E-tourism, being a relatively new concept, is confronted with numerous operational and technological issues it has to address. At the same time, it has to address consumers' concerns on the protection of privacy, use of data, and personalisation. This means that if traveller's concerns are not met, the consumers may not trust e-tourism services and may switch to traditional services and products, which include the offline channels of booking.

Recommendations for E-tourism Organisations and the Industry

In order to mitigate the issues of privacy and security in e-tourism, there is a need for enterprises to adopt a holistic management approach that involves business strategy, information management and consumer behavior. For instance, to ensure that the customer information is secure and to prevent data breaches or security failure, e-tourism companies should adopt strong data governance measures such as Controls, Encryption, and Incident Management. At the same time, these businesses must identify third-party risks, conduct thorough due diligence, state contractual obligations, and periodically examine the cybersecurity policies of the partners in their ecosystem.

In addition to these operational and technological strategies, e-tourism companies should consider enhancing consumer confidence by adopting more transparent practices and implementing more user control features. Justifiable and simple data protection regulations, highly granular control over permissions and data management, and the adherence to generally accepted principles of data use that do not infringe on the rights of an individual. E-tourism businesses should adopt the use of emerging technologies such as blockchain, biometrics, and privacy-enhancing analytics to enhance their privacy and security in light of the emerging challenges in the industry. Hence, the tourism organisations that opt for these enhanced solutions can enhance data protection measures, manage the risks from third-party vendors, and offer services that are tailored to consumers without compromising their privacy.

Thus, the actors in the correct handling of privacy and security in e-tourism include the tourism enterprises, the technology providers, the policymakers, and the consumer protection authorities. In this manner, the industry can create a pathway for establishing consumer confidence and work on its efficiency and correct data management in a way that is key for its growth and the improvement of travelling experiences in the digital age.

Limitation of the Study

The limitations of this study are tied to its reliance on a qualitative literature review, which may lack the robustness of empirical, data-driven methodologies. The results synthesize the available literature, which may not accurately capture fast-changing threats or technological solutions in e-tourism. It also limits variance related to regional nuances and stakeholder-specific perspecties within the ecosystem of e-tourims. Second, this focus on block chain, biometrics and privacy-enhancing technologies is forward -looking but dies not duly consider the challenges of their practical implementation or consumer acceptance barriers.

Future Research Directions

This paper has presented a case for the need to pay attention to issues of privacy and security in the e-tourism business as the field grows in the future; several avenues of research can be taken to advance further the knowledge and management of these concerns in this industry.

One of the key and important areas of research is the empirical analysis of the financial, operational, and reputational costs and consequences of data breaches and security incidents for e-tourism companies and the effects of such events on consumers' trust and behaviour in the future. This work can contribute to the development of better practices for managing risks and provide recommendations for investments in security technologies and data protection.

In addition, future studies should explore the effectiveness and readiness of future privacy-enhancing technologies such as blockchain, biometrics, and differential privacy for e-tourism applications. This may involve identifying the potential technical and operational risks and opportunities in implementing these novel solutions, understanding consumer attitudes and orientations towards these solutions, and evaluating the positive and negative effects of these solutions on the overall user experience and the capacity of the e-tourism industry to manage the tension between personalisation and privacy.

Legal frameworks and industry standards define the level of privacy and security within e-tourism firms. Academic research could also focus on the practical applicability of current legislation, such as the GDPR or CCPA, with regard to the specific concerns of the tourism sector as well as possibilities for enhanced standardisation for compliance and consumer trust.

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Athens Journal of Tourism - Volume 12, Issue 1, March 2025 – Pages 61-84

Factors that Drive Sex Tourism in Malawi

By Kasuzi C. Mbaluko[*]

Operating within organised networks, sex tourism is one of the transnational challenges that has a great impact on persons (especially women and children) in developing nations such as Malawi. This study explored the status of sex tourism, the attitudes that people have on sex tourism, the influential factors that drive the practice of sex tourism and, the opportunities and challenges that are encountered by those that are involved in sex tourism in Malawi. Involving 120 respondents, data for this study was collected from the districts of Nkhatabay, Salima and Mangochi. Motivations of sex tourism are economic gains, chances of emigrating overseas, getting a spouse/partner, sponsored trips, support of local community projects as well as exploring one's sexuality. Sex tourists enjoy anonymity when they engage sex workers in a developing country. Interwoven in sex tourism in Malawi are heterosexual identities, issues of romance and commercial sex relationship, culture and religion. All these dynamics happen in an equation of socio-economic, cultural and legal platform. In general, foreign tourists find the Malawian sex workers and children as easy prey. Though sex tourism has its negative effects, these are downplayed because of the economic gains that the locals get. For sex tourism to thrive, there must exist a labour market in which men and women are economically disadvantaged which spurs them entry into sex work. That presents the locals as readily accessible objects of consumption. Unlike in other studies where there are more male sex tourists, in Malawi female sex tourists are more. For these female sex tourists, it is an avenue of accessing handsome, young and fit bodies to obtain affirmation of their own sexual desirability, a thing that they would not easily get in their home countries. The study recommends that Malawi should accelerate its economic development efforts to ensure they escape poverty that traps them in sex tourism. Also, more efforts should be made to sensitize the public on some negative aspects associated with sex tourism such as child sex tourism and human trafficking.

Keywords: *Sex tourism, Malawi, poverty, development, tourism policy, children, white women, white men, black women, black men*

Introduction

Sex tourism, a subset of tourism, is one of the world's most controversial industries, globally pervasive, embracing multiple stakeholders and contextualised within complex systems. Tourists travel to other places, usually some distance from their place of residence, for exploration. By definition, sex tourism refers to 'tourists who travel to other countries, specifically to purchase sexual services of local women and men' (Brooks & Heaslip 2018; Lu et al 2020). It is travel by buyers of sexual services for the purpose of procuring sexual services from another

[*]PhD Student, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Republic of South Africa.

person in exchange for money and/or goods. Sex tourism can occur between countries or cities. A major aspect of sex tourism is the commoditisation of the bodies of the participants in the destination area. Sex tourism is in most cases practiced to satisfy certain sexual inclinations. Lu et al. (2020) have pointed out that many men choose to travel to particular destinations because they know that it is possible to pursue their sexual interests more cheaply and safely. In most cases, men and women from developed countries have a desire for experiencing myriad sexual encounters with the locals in developing countries. Some foreigners do not travel to developing countries specifically to buy sexual services, but enter into sexual relationships with locals as soon as the opportunity presents itself (Kachipande 2019). Usually, these sex tourists have fantasies regarding sex with men and women of other races. They travel so that they can have easy sexual access to cheap Black or Latino, Asian and 'Oriental' women, men and/or children. In sex tourism, the bodies of women, children, and young men become commoditised (Mendoza 2014; Scott 2022). In this case, the tourists buy the person at a price for sexual services. Sex tourism has become prevalent, especially in South-East Asia and some African countries (Neal 2018). Despite the high prevalence of sex tourism, few travelers are willing to identify with the label of 'sex tourist' due to the negative stigmas associated to it, such as being called exploiters or dirty old men and women (Villar 2019; Wolf 2019). This is perhaps due to the ambiguities in the definition and the common perceptual parameters limiting a sex tourist to one who directly pays for sex. Sexual tourism is viewed as social exchange instead of an outright sex-for-money commerce. Sex tourism is the practice of travelling somewhere for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity. This does involve, though not limited to, (but is not limited to) full-service sex work (prostitution), massage parlours, brothels, strip clubs, brothels and foreign dating sites that cater specifically to tourists looking for a good time (Hillis 2021). Sex tourism has been practiced probably as far back as tourism. Sex tourism is a complex and multifaceted issue. The complexity is in that it is not easy to pin point and measure it since it is in many, if not most cases, practiced in secrecy. Mostly, it is men travelling to developing countries seeking sexual pleasure (Cervone 2021). Over the past few decades, the sex tourism industry has diversified beyond its traditional patriarchal form of exploitation and leisure (Boruah 2021, Despres 2021). Sex tourism is no longer restricted to Western men traveling to have sex with women in developing countries. The industry has expanded to include Western females engaging in transactional sex with men in developing countries and even gay sex tourism (Muendo 2022). Sex tourism is anchored in networks that provide services such as sex workers, tourist guides, show organisers or massage parlours, and that serve not only foreign tourists but local customers as well (Quevedo-Gómez 2020).

Sex tourism exists in all continents inasmuch as some countries may be known so much for the practice of commercial sex (Stončikaitė 2020). Sex tourism is a major source of earning money for certain countries, especially the developing ones, to an extent that some countries promote the practice. As Carvalho (2022) argues, sexuality appears as a productive instrument in advertising news, campaigns, newspapers, magazines, books, films or television shows. In different contexts, sexuality is used as powerful marketing tool; used successfully in the sale-purchase process of diverse products or services. Chronis (2015) has contended that the economic sector of tourism is frequently promoted through advertising campaigns that associate dream places and landscapes with the image of beautiful women or manly men. A new tourist attraction appears that they cannot access at home due to certain social, political, religious, moral, norms or standards. The body is therefore born as a tourist attraction, through which passions, desires and curiosities of any kind, can be satisfied by a simple trip to a country or locality, where the travelers can satisfy their sexual curiosity (Nimara 2021). Many sex tourists, who would not even be eligible for a date back in their country, find solace in the fact that their money buys their egos back, at the expense of someone else's health or happiness (Hassan & Noaman 2017; Stončikaitė 2020). The gratification is in the fact that they have monetary resources and power, and the society supports the idea that finances can procure you anything, including a beautiful girl or woman.

Some studies on sex tourism tended to focus on the image of a Western male sex tourist travelling to a developing country, such as Southeast Asia (Lines 2015, Koops et al 2017). While traditionally, sex tourists have always been men, in recent years there has been a surge in the number of women from United States of America (USA), Canada and Europe that travel to developing countries for the reason of having sex with local men (Lodinová 2018). From the mid-1990s, there is a growing realisation that sex tourism is a critical aspect of the tourism industry, with gender variables constantly changing. One now has the opportunity to study either one or both sexes together, theorising how behaviours and roles are given gendered meanings, how labour is divided to express gender and gendered disparities symbolically, and how the social structures integrate gender values and present gender advantages in hierarchical relationships. Erin (2017) has opined that the entry of women as consumers within the sex tourism industry dates back to the early 1960s. At that time, Scandinavian, British, and German women began to travel to other European destinations - particularly to Italy, Spain, and Greece - in order to engage in situational sexual relations with local men. The arrival of mass tourism allowed women to travel farther afield to find young men (Babar 2019). While the demographics of female sex tourism differ from place to place; in general, female sex tourists are usually older White women, from developed countries who might struggle to find love or a sexual connection in their home countries and travel elsewhere for the promise of excitement and romance (Babar 2019; Spencer & Bean 2017). The men that have sex with these women are called 'bumsters' in Gambia (Gothenburg 2018), 'Rastitutes' or 'beach boys' in the Caribbean and 'sanky pankies' in the Dominican Republic (Cabezas 2019). These are the men who, in increasing numbers, are providing sex in return for money or goods to women who want a holiday 'romance'. The men are in most cases from poor families, have limited or no education and are sometimes illiterate. Samarathunga (2018) has reported that the beach boys claim that there is little shame or stigma in selling sex to older White female tourists, and some claim earning money this way affirms their masculinity. Most of these tourists travel alone or with female friends and often have a history of unhappy relationships with men at home. They are looking for attention and excitement but end up, often without realising it, being one half of a sex work deal (Spencer & Bean 2017). Women who feel rejected by men in the developed countries for being overweight and older find that in the developing countries, they are admired (Falconer 2015; Keppel 2016). There, they are romanced, appreciated and loved by men. This appeal can emanate from the ethnicity differences between the sex tourist and the sex worker or the foreign lifestyle that the locals live. Women who have sexual encounters with such men are typically middle-aged and of European ethnicities (Omondi & Ryan 2020; Frohlick et al. 2016).

Sex work is sometimes framed within the context of state-sponsored decision-making and corporate expansion. Laws that make sex work illegal often contradict economic development policies that indiscriminately seek profit off the bodies of working-class people (Pitcher 2015). Sex work is illegal in some countries while in others it is legal (Mendoza 2014). The position of most countries on sex tourism is mostly obscure as the practice has an economic dimension to people. Sex work in Malawi is legal but living off the proceeds of sex work is illegal. Niu et al (2021) have pointed out that sex work is a popular trade and is prevalent around hotels and bars in urban and tourist areas in Malawi. Malawi is experiencing a rise in the number of sex workers with young girls even dropping out of school to join the trade. For most young girls and women, poverty exposes them to unprotected sex (Jimu et al. 2023). This might be due to their inability to access condoms and pressure from their clients who bargain to pay more if they do not use a condom. The consequences are dire: infection with STIs including HIV, unplanned pregnancies which in some cases result in unsafe abortions (Odimegwu & Ugwu 2022). While commercial sex work is the business or practice of engaging in sexual activity in exchange for payment, sex tourism involves the exchange of money coupled with the strategic movement of people travelling from developed countries to less developed countries seeking sexual pleasure. Regardless of whether it is not legal or accounted for, every country is directly or indirectly involved in sex tourism in some way. Some are known to be sex tourism generators while other countries are known to be sex tourism destinations (Grouchy 2020).

Sex tourism is a global phenomenon (Gwoździewicz & Koryluk 2018). Sex tourism is rampant where there is high poverty and gender inequalities, limited employment opportunities, large family sizes, inadequate awareness about its effects (Kabue 2021; Koning & van Wilsem 2022). Koops et al. (2017) have pointed out that certain tourism destinations are frequented by paedophiles and supported by networks of pimps, taxi drivers, hotel staff, brothel owners, entertainment establishments, and tour operators. These serve as links in facilitating sex tourism. Interventions to discourage sex tourism are seen by some stakeholders as key to reducing the demand for sex trafficking (Bah et al 2021; Brooks & Heaslip 2018).

As is true in different parts of the world, poverty is a powerful force fuelling human trafficking. Different countries have major markets of commercial sexual services, and each country is a destination for sex tourists from abroad and internally. Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery. It is a crime against humanity (Sweileh 2018). The practice of sex tourism and child sex tourism as well as the use of hotels in sex trafficking are some instances of the overlap between the travel industry and modern slavery (Zhang 2018). Child sex tourism is considered one of the major ethical issues in the tourism and hospitality industry. These tourists violate the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, and of the

Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (UN 2000). Minors and children have the right to be protected from sexual trafficking and exploitation from adults and traffickers. Child sex tourism is a serious global problem, with child sex tourists travelling mostly from developed countries such the United States and Europe to poor developing countries in the Caribbean, Asia and Africa. In most countries, the younger a girl is, the more a client will pay (Deb 2020). These are not people that would conventionally be labelled 'predator'. These are people who are found middle-class, suburban neighbourhoods.

In Malawi, sex tourism is prevalent along the districts of Lake Malawi (Kachipande 2019). These are the destination places for most tourists that visit Malawi.

Materials and Methods

Research Design. This research utilised the Qualitative Approach that focuses on how people interpret and construct their experiences and their worlds, and the meaning that attributes to their experience. Specifically, case study design was employed as it allows the researchers to explore a real-life situation through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information such as observation, interview, documentation and reports.

Population and Locale of the study. This study was conducted in Nkhatabay, Salima and Mangochi. These are districts along Lake Malawi. Data was collected from 120 respondents: 30 through key informant interviews (KIIs), 30 participants from in-depth interviews (IDIs) and 60 participants from focus group discussions (FGDs). The participants were selected based on their information, knowledge and experience with sex tourism. To arrive at the number of participants, purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is a technique whereby respondents are chosen based on the discretion or judgement of the researchers. The criteria in the selection of the participants include: (a) they are at least 18 years of age and (b) currently residing in the targeted three districts.

Data Gathering Tools. The main data gathering instrument used in this study is interview aided by an interview guide. Notes were taken during the interviews. The researcher formulated interview guide questions based on the needed information that are related to the topic and specific problems of this study. The interview guide tackled the status of sex tourism, the motivations that drives one into sex tourism and the opportunities and challenges that those who engage in sex tourism encounter.

Data Gathering Procedure. After the identification of the participants and before the data gathering, an informed consent form containing the conditions of the interview was presented and clearly explained to the participants. Upon explanation, the researcher asked the participant if they fully understood the undertakings of the informed consent and they were requested to affix their signature as proof of their consent. The interview was conducted at the time the participants were available because they were interviewed individually and privately. For some questions, the respondents tackled them in groups.

Treatment of Data. The data obtained from the interview were organised and divided into sections. Through joint and thorough analysis of the researchers, the researcher could reflect on what the participants' want to express during the interview without bias. The researcher interpreted right away the data collected and made sure that there was no any bias and empathy with the participants' life events. Using axial coding, the data were related together in order to reveal codes, categories and subcategories ground within one's collected data. The codes and coding technique utilises the case-oriented approach strategy referred to as 'partial ordered displays' to analyse the case study data. This strategy allows for the quick identification of the segments relating to the research questions and any potential themes. The process involves creating codes to be used for the analysis of the case study data and then coding the data. Codes are tags or labels that assign units of meaning to the data and for the quick identification of the segments relating to the research questions and any potential themes.

Data analysis. The recorded interviews from the participants were translated and transcribed into written form. Verbatim transcripts are considered authentic as they can be true to the intentions of the participant. It was very vital for the researcher to ensure that the data was free from bias and distortions. The researcher used the qualitative thematic content analysis and the discourse analysis to analyse the data (Vaismoradi & Snelgrove 2019). Discourse analysis was mainly used to focus importantly on the language that was used by the participants. In discourse analysis, language is examined in terms of construction and function; that is, language is considered a means of constructing rather than mirroring reality (Macrae 2020). Discourse analysis was critical to this study as it goes hand in hand with the study's theoretical framework. The researcher followed the steps set out in doing the thematic content analysis. Initially, it was important for the researcher to familiarise himself with the data by perusing through the transcripts. According to McMullin (2023), the process of transcription, while it may be seen as time-consuming, frustrating, and at times tedious, can be an excellent way to start familiarising yourself with the data. Transcription is about transforming spoken discourse into a written form that is fully amenable to analysis and available for inclusion in the report of the research. Transcription was an essential first step to discourse analysis as it is challenging to keep in mind the emerging discourses. Collins & Hardie (2022) agree that transcription is essential that a record of the data may be made available for checking the analysis by other researchers and also for reanalysing. A thorough reading of the data ensures that the researcher became immersed in the data. Immersion usually involves repeated reading of the data, and reading the data in an active way-searching for meanings, patterns and so on. Immersion meant that the researcher became familiar with the data to the depth and breadth of the content. The second phase of the analysis focused on coding interesting patterns of data emerging. Marshall & Rossman (2011) postulated that 'coding data is the formal representation of analytical thinking'. Codes identify a feature of the data (semantic content or latent) that appears interesting to the analyst and refer to 'the most basic segment or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon' (Linneberg & Korsgaard 2019). This entailed 'working systematically through the entire data set, giving full and equal attention to each data item and identifying interesting aspects in the data items that may form the basis of repeated patterns (themes) across the data set' (Coates et al. 2021). The sentences, lines and phrases were coded. All the actual data extracts were coded and then collated together within each code. In the third phase, the researcher sorted the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes. The researcher considered how different codes combined to form an overarching theme. This was done with the utilisation of visual representation in the form of mind-maps and tables to sort the codes into themes. After this phase, the researcher moved to the next phase of reviewing themes by verifying if they corresponded with coded extracts, thereby creating a thematic map of the analysis. Phase, 4 begins when you have devised a set of candidate themes, and it involves the refinement of those themes, and it will become evident that some candidate themes are not themes while others might collapse into each other (Nowell et al. 2017). This meant that the researcher needed to read all the collated extracts for each theme and considered whether they appeared to form a coherent pattern. In this phase, the entire data set was reread for two purposes. The first was to ascertain whether the themes work with the data set. The second was to code any additional data within themes that have been missed in earlier coding stages (Dawadi 2020). At the end of this phase, the researcher had a pretty good idea of the various themes and the way they fit into each other. The researcher then defined and further refined the themes, and made sure that consideration was made to link the themes to the research questions and objectives of the study. The recorded and transcribed interviews were analysed based on their themes. NVIVO software was used to identify broad themes and relevant verbatim quotations from the oral interviews conducted. Thematic analysis, a qualitative methodology common within social research and a popular form of social constructivist analysis, was the process utilised to interpret the data collected for this study. The interpretive nature of thematic analysis greatly compliments the interpretive turn taking place with the social sciences (Nowell 2017). According to Kiger & Varpio (2020), the purpose of all forms of constructivist analysis is to reveal the 'cultural materials from which particular utterances, texts or events have been constructed'. Through the framework of a social constructivist paradigm, emphasis is placed on identifying themes that show how social constructions of reality are created and how they influence the thoughts, experiences, and decision-making of groups and individuals. Thematic analysis is a methodology used for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke 2019). Inductively driven data analysis works 'down' from pre-existing theoretical understandings (Connelly & Peltzer 2016). Thematic analysis allows categories to emerge, putting great emphasis on the interpretation and inductive deductive abilities of the researcher. There was a grid to collate the data provided in the interview guides. The responses were put into a set of broad categories. The elicited responses from the interview guides provided commonality of thoughts about sex tourism in Malawi. The data from the interview guides were interrogated based on commonality of ideas. The results from the qualitative data enabled the researcher to come up with conclusions on sex tourism in Malawi.

Results

Factors that Influence Sex Tourism

There are a number of reasons reported that make sex tourism to flourish in Malawi. Some of the reasons are: availability and easy access to sex workers in Malawi, availability of infrastructure along Lake Malawi and other parts of the country, interest of sex tourists in local men and women, poverty, veil of anonymity of the tourists in a foreign country, loneliness of sex tourists, trying to find something new and, searching for long-term relationships.

Availability and Easy Access to Sex Workers

Commercial sexual activity means any sex act or sexually explicit performance for which anything of value is given, promised to, or received by any person and includes, but is not limited to, sex work and participation in the production of pornography (Finkel & Matheson 2015). Apart from the law that criminalises having sex with those below the age of 18, there are no legal, policy and moral restrictions in accessing sex workers in Malawi. While the government disapproves sexual exploitation, it mostly does not come out strongly against the practice for fear of turning away tourists. The majority of the respondents stated that tourists tend to seek commercial sex services in Malawi because the services are readily available and quite cheap compared to what they would pay for the same services in their home countries. Though not found everywhere in Malawi, there are a lot of places where one can easily access commercial sex from willing locals. The community members stated that the government seems not interested in monitoring the operations concerning sex tourism.

> Most tourists are able to enjoy lifestyles they could never enjoy in their home countries. Furthermore, some of the tourists may hold menial jobs in their industrialised home countries but because of the disparity in salaries and high exchange rates, they appear comparatively rich when in Malawi (Male Key Informant, P2).

While in Malawi, the tourists tend to spend their money on sexual activities that are associated with the rich and the famous in their home countries. When compared to the thrill of having exotic sex with a local and the sense of adventure that other activities can provide, the former weighs more. Cheap and easy access to sex workers enables the tourists to procure services of sex workers.

Availability of Infrastructure

It was reported that sex tourism thrives along Lake Malawi partly because there is available infrastructure. There are a number of hotels, nightclubs, bars, and beaches where sex workers and client relationships are formed and sexual relations consummated. There are marketing strategies that help to attract the attention of sex tourists about the benefits of visiting Malawi.

> Brochures packed with alluring images of naked skin, often represented by models pictured by the lake in bikinis and happy couples walking along the beach of Lake Malawi does promote marketing of sex tourism for Malawi. The images of beautiful women and muscular men incites interest in tourists to explore Malawi. By using sexy adverts, sexual tourism phenomenon appears in the strategy of promoting Malawi, through a wide range of representations with sexual or erotic notes (Female Key Informant, P1).

Interest of Female Sex Tourists

Most informants in the study stated that most female sex tourists are fascinated with certain men including rastas, curio sellers and others with simple jobs. This is because they are viewed as honest, outgoing and easy to live with.

> Those that are muscular are viewed as being strong in bed. Some of these women are slim while others are overweight. Ordinarily, it is difficult for Malawian men to propose to a White woman. This is because the White women are viewed as being on a high social stratum. Apart from that, most Malawians do not have financial muscles to entertain a White woman. For most men, having a relationship with a White woman is like having a gold mine (Male Key Informant, Tour Guide, P2).

Most of the locals that interact with the White tourists have basic rudiments of spoken English and this is what they use when interacting with tourists. Unlike in other countries, women that travel to Malawi for sex tourism are usually younger than fifty years. The informants in the study stated that most female sex tourists are attracted to the unkempt, low ranking Malawian men. This is partly because they want to experience ‘loose’ life in Malawi. Most of these men smoke marijuana, take drugs and engage in other illegal transactions. Another reason provided by the respondents is that in European and North American countries, the Rastas are regarded as peaceful and trustworthy people. The White women are interested in someone who will take them to places where they can find fun. The White women like these men because they take them to places of entertainment where they get excitement. The White tourists, especially the women are not interested to have sexual relations with decent looking, formally dressed men. It was stated that they are in most cases suspicious of such men as they suspect them to be government and police investigators. Another reason is that formally dressed people are viewed as high class and the White tourists would not be able to ask for certain illicit things that happen in Malawi. In general, the Whites are in Malawi for fun and therefore interact with people that will enable them to maximise their pleasure. Most of the tourists are looking for a ‘good, quality’ time. In a way, they want to spend time with someone that they can relax and be free.

> In most cases, the ones that can provide them maximum fun are tour guides, curio sellers and others since they are well versed with the culture of the Whites. They are also viewed as romantic and faithful. The decently dressed and well to do men are viewed as people that can cheat on them (Male Key Informant, P8).

The informants stated that male tourists tend to get attracted to women with 'loose' morals since they are the ones that are easily found in places of entertainment.

The informants in the study stated that in some cases, Malawians can bad mouth each other just to ensure that they win over the heart of a White tourist.

> These tourists tend to give their partners some funds before they travel back to their home countries. The sex tourists also give the locals gifts such as guitars, CDs, USB drives, an MP3 player and a DVD player (P1 Female Sex Worker, age 28-37, In-depth Interview)

Poverty of most Malawians

A majority of Malawian sex workers that are into sex tourism in Malawi are in the age ranges of 18-40 years. They are able to speak basic English which enables them to communicate with the tourists. The sex affairs are not confined to girls, as more young men join the practice in search of financial resources. Many young men and women (most of them primary and secondary school dropouts) have had their lives dramatically transformed by befriending European tourists. The Lake Malawi shores are known to attract tourists looking for sex, mainly from European countries. Most of the sex tourists that travel to Africa are driven by fantasy stories that the African (in this case Malawian) men and women are energetic in bed. They also promise the young unemployed men and women marriage and a trip to their countries.

There was unanimous agreement among the respondents that despite having a stable political environment for the past 60 years, Malawi continues to suffer from a number of social and economic problems. The country is plagued by high unemployment rates, large disparities between the rich and the poor, gender inequality, high government debt, and lack of investment in education and health. In addition, more than 50 percent of the population lives below the national poverty line. These inequalities, lack of opportunities and social programmes result in men and women creating economic means for themselves. It was stated that most locals are weighed down by financial issues. They pointed out that most Malawians practice sex tourism due to poverty (Hassan & Noaman 2017). One respondent stated that poverty forces a person to make decisions that they would not otherwise make if their living conditions were better.

> Malawi has more than 50% unemployment rates that keeps surging. Moreover, the country is characterised by mismanagement of public funds and poor legal systems. These issues cause unemployment and poverty. Some people also go into sex tourism due to family problems such as child abuse or chauvinism. Street children are also lured into sex tourism because they lack basic needs (Female Key Informant, P5).
>
> Some parents or relatives encourage children into sex trade so that they generate money for the household (Male Key Informant, P3).
>
> In the case of young and uneducated Malawians that are expected to put food on the table for their family, the issue of making a free choice to sell their body becomes a critical issue (Male Key Informant, P8).

Some face family problems and resort to using drugs. They do this as they think that by taking drugs, their problems will be sorted. In the long run, they also become sex workers. Drugs and sex work have been documented to have a direct correlation. Sometimes drug use is influenced by either the client, the sex worker or both. Drug use tend to predate sex work among low-level sex workers with the connection most likely due to economic necessity. Low-level sex workers tend to use depressants (Jeal et al. 2018).

> Some people go into sex tourism to seek sexual adventure with different races (P19 Male Sex Worker, Age 38-47 In-depth Interview).

Many Malawian women are overburdened by high fertility rates and lack of family planning services. This situation is exacerbated by poor maternal health and inadequate nutritional status. Thus, most women have family care burdens including caring for children, which makes it very difficult for them to engage in any meaningful economic activity.

> There is general lack of knowledge about both their rights and the resources that are potentially available to them. The situation is further compounded by the prevailing attitudes of the society to women's abilities and socio-economic roles (Female Key Informant, P6).

It was stated that due to massive poverty in Malawi, those living in poverty are the most vulnerable to sex tourism. Those that hold little power or status in the society in which they live, find themselves in positions of powerlessness and inferiority. They are perceived as having little intrinsic cultural worth or value and therefore become rendered as a commodity, to be sold in exchange for money, which is especially prevalent for women and children living in extreme poverty.

> This perception of them as a commodity is further perpetuated when they enter the sex industry, either by choice or coercion as they can find themselves dehumanised, perceived as an object with little worth. This in turn, further increases their vulnerability (Female Key Informant, P6).

Due to poverty, the respondents reported that some people in Malawi rely on the sexual commerce industry as a means of economic survival.

> Sex is used as one of the tools that some people use to participate in the sex tourism industry to balance the economic disparity created by various policies and inequalities. The selling of sex continues to be used by men and women in Malawi to access financial resources (P1 Female Sex Worker, age 28-37, In-depth Interview)
> While the young Malawian men and women are not being controlled by violent pimps or traffickers, it is difficult to ascertain true freedom of choice when somebody is living in abject poverty. Rampant poverty, mass unemployment and lack of opportunities for education makes it difficult for young Malawians to survive. For some Malawian men and women, their bodies are their main source of capital (Male Key Informant, P1)

Deep-rooted sexism ensures deep-seated and daily discrimination, while engrained customs from polygamy to child marriage leave girls and women disproportionately vulnerable. Despite the evidence of this growing problem, Malawi underestimates, misunderstands or ignores the scale of this crime. On online child sexual exploitation, legislation and child protection measures are failing to keep up. Buying and selling of ones' body as a commodity also leads to certain abuses. Often, underage girls are abused for the sexual satisfaction of clients. The multiple number of times sex workers engage with their clients also gradually decreases their feeling of worth.

Some of the respondents in the study disclosed that in some cases, families or friends 'sell' their children in sex work so that those families are able to meet their basic needs. The average family size is large and it is difficult to make a living that will support a large family.

> While the government and other institutions advocate for birth control, so many poor families continue to have 4 to 5 children which just make their situation worse. Many parents struggle to find a way to support their family. Many parents sacrifice the future of their daughters by marrying them off. Many marry at a tender age or become sex workers when they see that their families are struggling to earn a living (Female Key Informant, P2).

Malawi's rapidly increasing population is putting pressure on the government to scale up services in social services, including education. Job opportunities on farms in rural areas are becoming fewer each year partly because of the effects of climate change. It was pointed out that due to this status of poverty, many persons decide to migrate to urban areas from the rural areas. For some girls, becoming a sex worker is one of the easiest options to make some money.

> The rationale to this migration is strongly done to find better jobs and opportunities. It is strengthened by the thought that there are better opportunities of success in urban areas rather than in their poor, undeveloped and rural homesteads, where they will only perform hard, labour work and receive low wages in return. Most females in Malawi are attracted to sex work and to the sex industry because it is considered as an easy way to earn money, providing better-paid opportunities for them (P1 Female Sex Worker, age 28-37, In-depth Interview)

Most young sex workers have a difficult choice to make between staying in their rural areas and that of migrating to urban centres. They have to weigh the advantages against the disadvantages. This view is held against a choice of otherwise spending their life working in more tough and challenging jobs such as domestic work or labour. Sex work- related mobility is often undertaken to maximise trade opportunity.

It was disclosed that sex tourism is considered as the main source of income for those practicing it and their families. Some women achieve economic independence despite the great adversities they encounter in their daily lives and work. The majority of women in this study reported being the highest income earners in the household, caring for up to three dependents, and demonstrated entrepreneurial characteristics and aspirations for the future. For some, apart from earnings they get from sex work, others are into businesses like selling groceries, clothes and home utensils.

> Some youths, especially women, migrate to the lakeshore with hope of finding a White tourist who can pay more or who might marry them and take them to the West; or at least who might become their boyfriend and give them money to take care of their needs (Female Key Informant, P6).

The respondents stated that most female tourists from Europe and North America send cash and gifts to their Malawian boyfriends and girlfriends when they leave for their home countries.

> Most Malawian sex workers receive money from their White tourists. One can receive monthly remittances of between US$20 and US$100. Most White tourists do not always realise how their local partners extract a financial benefit from them (Female Key Informant, P5)

It was reported that when they are attractive destinations, it is the sex tourists that pay for things such as transport, food and gifts. In most cases, the sex tourists are twice the age of the local sex workers.

> The Malawian men participating in sex tourism are not the ones that cater for the needs of the woman but it is the other way round. The relationship with the while woman removes the economic burden that a man has to satisfy the financial needs of the woman (P19 Male Sex Worker, Age 38-47 In-depth Interview).

One of the benefits that the sex workers gain from sex tourism is that they also get to travel through Malawi and other countries on the budget of the sex tourists. This is on top of the finances that they get and use for their family needs.

> While those engaged in sex tourism are called names, they do not mind it as far as they are able to earn a living. The locals that participate in sex tourism are motivated in that they are provided resources in cash or in kind (Key Female Informant, P12).

The resources that the sex workers acquire from sex tourism outweighs the challenges that the sex workers encounter in sex tourism. The respondents pointed out that sex tourists create demand and pay big money for local male partners. Apart from the money that they give to sex workers, communities in areas where sex workers stay also benefit from educational resources, support to charity institutions and other development projects.

> In some cases, it is a conduit for them to obtain a visa and an air ticket to the country where the sex tourist is coming from. For these locals, the older the woman or man, the better (Key Male Informant, P10).
> These relationships are mostly between European sex tourists and local partners, often with vast age differences. Some locals having the European girlfriends and boyfriends have managed to build houses from the proceeds of sex tourism. Even while abroad,

> some of these sex tourists send gifts and money to their partners in Malawi (P7 Male Sex Worker, age 28-37, FGD).

It was stated during the study that this is done as the relationships financially benefit the Malawians in sex tourism. For some local partners, they use some of the funds for themselves and some to support their family including parents and other members.

> In cases where an old woman has a relationship with a young man, the parents or the community do not get bothered at all. The interest is on the money that the young man gets. This would not be the case if the younger man was having a relationship with an older Malawian woman: the older Malawian woman would be mocked by the community. In the case of female sex tourists, they are immersed in the love as they are pampered (P19 Male Sex Worker, Age 38-47 In-depth Interview).

Others said that some women do not have partners to support them or their children so they get involved in sex tourism due to the opportunities it provides them. They venture into the sex industry due to limited opportunities but they gain financial resources. It also includes many young girls that are fed up of living a life with no clear future; they are willing to trade everything for a better life. They see sex tourism as offering them a brighter future.

> Many of them are exposed through social media how a luxury easy life should be, the feeling of being rich, the ability to buy expensive beautiful things. And then they get influenced by their friends or follow the lead of the oldest among them, believing that by becoming a sex worker they could transform their lives. Moreover, for them, foreigners are equaled to money, a gateway for a better life and a ticket to overseas where they can experience what they deserve (Male Key Informant, P7).

Most of the informants were of the view that if a Malawian is lucky to attract a sex tourist, they could become lovers and have a better life.

Young people get attracted to the money and other resources that their peers get from sex tourism. The informants pointed out that these youth see the benefits their peers get from trading sexual services and attract them to sex tourists.

> When young individuals see what their friends are gaining from selling sex, others get attracted to the practice. The only thing they think of is to start selling sexual services. They influence each other and the change is very rapid (Female Key Informant, 9).
> There are also a lot of cases where the sex tourists have found some jobs in their countries for the local partners. Some buy an air ticket for these partners to go and stay abroad, mostly in European countries (P9 Male Sex Worker, age 28-37, FGD).

Some sex tourists stated that they come to Malawi and engage in sex tourism to save the locals from poverty and the despicable conditions of life. They see their role as ‘saviours’ - they do not see anything wrong with their sex tourism.

> The poverty rates in Malawi are quite high. One of the reasons of coming to do sex tourism here is also to contribute to the economy of the country. The local sex workers earn something from tourists (P4 Male Sex Tourist, Age 48-57 In-depth Interview).

While a majority of female White tourists admitted to certain ‘economic elements’ to their liaisons with the Malawian men, they did not perceive their sexual encounters as commercial sexual transactions, nor did they view themselves as seeking the services of a sex worker. It would be said that there is the ‘happy hooker’ trope, where young and attractive women in developing nations turn to sex work in order to live lavish lifestyles and afford luxuries that an office job would not provide. The respondents pointed out that the relationships between the White tourists and the locals are born out of need rather than want.

Anonymity of the tourists in a foreign country

Some tourists that were interviewed stated that when one goes to a destination away from the home country, there is the assurance of anonymity, which releases them from the usual restraints, which determine their behaviours in their home countries.

> A person’s behaviour is often different when they are away from home. Tourism allows people ‘to lose their identity’ and gives them the freedom to escape realities and to live their fantasies. Most tourists behave differently when on holiday (P3 Female Sex Tourist, Age 28-37 In-depth Interview)

While in Malawi, most of the tourist women do not like to give their full names because their friends and family members are not aware they go abroad for sex. In another country they feel that they are able to live another secret life away from their home. They are more adventurous and are more likely to engage in risky behaviours.

> Men and women that would never visit brothels in their home countries for example, end up doing so in Malawi where there is a negligible chance of detection and (or) penalty (P4 Male Sex Tourist, Age 48-57 In-depth Interview)

Loneliness of Sex Tourists

For most sex tourists, there is an impression of something lacking at home, like their needs are not being met (not only sexual but also psychological and emotional support). It was disclosed that most of the women that come to Malawi for sex tourism are shunned by men of their own age in their home countries because they want slimmer and younger women. They travel alone or with female friends and often have a history of unhappy relationships with men back in their countries. They are looking for attention and excitement. A majority of the respondents indicated that most of the tourists, especially the old female ones, lack the pampering from men when they are in their home countries.

> Some of them are divorced, having fantasies about sunbathing on white sand and swimming in a fresh water source, Lake Malawi. Some Malawian young men stage-manage romantic affairs with the older women tourists and get to wine and dine with them (Key Male Informant, P10).

White female tourists, in particular, explained that they felt valued in Malawi. Their experiences are very different from when they are not back home. Their economic prowess and their whiteness mean that they are not treated as local women but respected and pampered. They are offered a stage upon which they can simultaneously affirm their womanness through their ability to command local men and reject the White men who have rejected them.

> With the rise in divorce and women's economic interests in recent years, there has been an increasing number of women from Europe, Canada, and the US traveling to developing countries, such as Malawi, to have sex with local men and also to refresh. In having the relationship with the local men, the female tourists look at it as a social arrangement (Male Key Informant, P10).
>
> Some tourists that come to Malawi to engage in sex tourism flee from unhappy relationships at home. They therefore feel that getting a partner from a developing country such as Malawi will maximise their chances of getting the right partner which will translate into having a happy relationship (Key Male Informant, P1).

A number of White women explained that they felt more valued in Malawi than back home. Their bodies are also valued over local women's. They feel more satisfied with themselves as a result.

Trying Something 'New'

The other reason mentioned, mainly by tourists, for their participation in sex tourism is the desire to try something 'nouveau' with a different race. For some reason, people think interracial sex is exotic and daring. Most people may decide to try out interracial sex just for the kick of it or out of curiosity.

> As one of the developing countries in Africa, Malawi represents a country where life is perceived as raw and wild and a place where people are uncontrolled, liberal, and polygamous. These reasons can partly explain why some European women visit Malawi to look for sex and marriage partners. Sex tourists feel by engaging locals in sex tourism, they are promoting racial harmony and deconstructing myths and fears about race conflict (Male Key Informant, 10)

In the case of black men, they are considered to have a lot of masculine traits the White women desires, a bulky, rough muscular body, broad shoulders and powerful legs and arms and very long, girthy penis. For some sex tourists, they view having sex with black men and women in developing countries such as Malawi as a natural and cultural experience. It is viewed as being adventurous in sex relations, a sweet escape from the routine of enjoying life in mostly urban and modern life of the developed countries.

> For female sex tourists, it is based on narratives that depict African males to the assumption that they are romantic and have passionate prowess compared to Western men. Most tourists travel to Malawi for sun, sand, safari and sex. (Key Male Informant, Tour Guide, P15)

The motivations for interracial sex between White sex tourists and black sex workers, as perceived by those that participated in this study can be divided into two distinct categories; firstly, is the perceived inability by the tourists to experience different races at home and secondly is the desire to have sex with black locals in their natural habitat in Malawi. The sex tourists enjoy economic power over the locals.

> Many of the tourists want to 'taste' what it feels like to have sex with an African (in this case a Malawian) in Africa. They would rather not do it within their own country or region due to being self-conscious of what their friends and family would say. This being the case, they choose to do it abroad. Sometimes the society in the region that these tourists come from would not let them have relations with those from other races. They come to Malawi because they want to have sexual relations with an African in an environment where they will not be judged for it at home. People come on vacation really to have the chance to enjoy different things, a different environment, climate and people. For most of them, it means a sexual experience in Malawi (Key Female Informant, P12).
>
> The female tourists are interested in having a sexual relationship with Malawian men as they had heard that they possess big penises and provide very good sex. The Malawian men are regarded as skilled in having sex (Key Male Informant, P8).

The Malawian boyfriends strive to be charming, solicitous and gracious companions: they actively profess their undying love for the woman, keeping in touch for months after they have left Malawi, and even proposing marriage.

> Many female sex tourists want buff, hard-bodied men. Some men get into bodybuilding and go shirtless, wearing tight bathing suits that emphasize their endowments (Female Key Informant, P5).

Searching for Long-term Relationships

For mature White women, it was reported that some come to Malawi in search of long- term relationships. Some informants pointed out that most of the White women that come to Malawi for sex tourism are not deemed beautiful in their countries. They therefore come to African countries where what matters is that they are White and are appreciated as such. Some White women said that they want a Malawian partner since most of the men in their countries are not interested in marriage. Most of the adult White women lead independent life: they are usually employed; they do not need to be approved of the partners they want. The informants pointed out that in most cases, those in sex tourism explore possibilities of having a long-term relationship. For some White women, they say that they want half caste children since they look beautiful.

> It feels like you are starting a different race of people. The experience of being in love with someone from a different background is interesting (P8 Female Sex Tourist, Age 38-47 In-depth Interview).

They generally do not have to seek approval if they want to have a black man as a partner. Long-term intimate relationships are basically founded upon the kind of interactions that an individual is exposed to in the early stages of their life. The White tourists and the sex workers interact on many fronts. For those that get along so well, they take their relationships to a higher level, leading to marriage.

Some Whites come to Malawi for charity work. They therefore need someone to be coordinating those charity works while they are back in their home countries. Once they find a Malawian partner, they take them as someone they can trust with their projects. For others, it is a conduit to gaining a Malawian citizenship.

For some Malawians, it was said that having a long-term relationship with a White person is viewed as prestigious. They choose to overcome the cultural dissimilarity to maintain the relationship with financial, social, cultural and political capital.

Discussion

Among the factors that drive sex tourism in Malawi is the need by the White tourists to explore sex in developing countries and the need by the Malawian sex workers to access financial resources and search for stable, long-term relationship. With high levels of poverty in Malawi, sex work serves as an alternative to find financial resources for household use. The average person in Malawi earns about $3 a day, according to the World Bank. For most Malawians, it is an issue of survival as life is quite tough (Machira et al. 2023). These Malawian sex workers (though they do not regard themselves as such) enter into sexual relationships with as many tourists as they possibly can, and most of these relationships result in some form of material or economic benefit for them. The dollars, euros and pounds are rolling in Malawi through sex tourism (Vuorensyrjä 2016). The local men and women are able to secure material and financial benefits from entering into sexual relationships with a series of tourists. They use strategies to extract cash benefits from their sexual partners as some sort of 'resource exchange'.

Some men are unable to accept the decline in the privileges that patriarchal societies traditionally bestowed on men, which is becoming the reality in many parts of the world (Kelley 2015). While some may argue that the Western tourists exploit the locals, it can also be said that the blacks also exploit the White tourists. Sex tourists and Malawian sex workers prey on each other through highly gendered, commonsense understandings of both 'courtship' within which each expects to benefit from the other (Vuorensyrjä 2016).

In socioeconomic terms, the female tourists have the upper hand over local men. While in their home countries some gender roles may constrain them, as sex tourists in Malawi, they are in charge over many aspects of their lives. The exploitation endemic in sex work does not disappear when women are the buyers. Whatever diplomatic arrangement they may use to support themselves, the female sex tourists are exploitative (Tremblay 2021). Just like any other kind of sex workers: they are providing a service, and they view themselves as self-employed freelancers who work hard for what they get. For female sex tourists, they like the control and power that they have over the local men. With the financial resources, they are in charge of their sexual life in deciding when they want to have sex and when they do not. For the male sex tourists, they are able to exercise their patriarchal values.

As advanced by Quevedo-Gómez et al. (2020), in sex tourism, there are consumers from developed nations seeking exoticised, racialised 'native' bodies, in the developing world for cut-rate prices. The components of race and its associated stereotypes and expectations and the economic disparities between the developed and developing countries characterise sex-tourist destinations throughout the world. In the case of Malawi, it does provide cheap and exotic sex for travellers.

While the men reported utilising transactional sex as both a survival and an advancement strategy, and receiving a superior masculine status as well as financial and material benefits, they also reinforce and perpetuate the racist stereotype about the black male as being hypersexual. The Malawian men are economically and socially marginalised; marginalisation that is inextricably linked to both contemporary and historical racism, play into rather than resist or oppose racist stereotypes about black male sexuality, leaving the impression that in order to survive economically, they have to contribute to their own continued oppression (Cheng 2021).

In the sex tourism industry, globalisation and patriarchy cooperate so that, even in the developed countries, it is still the bodies and lives of marginalised women and girls that are commodified and objectified in order to ensure profit and pleasure for the privileged. There is a perpetuation of a system that assumes that the bodies of marginalised people (overwhelmingly women and girls) exist to satisfy the manufactured 'needs' of wealthier, more privileged people. For the White tourists, the money and the power that comes with it buys them things that they could never dream of having at home. It is impossible not to notice the unsavoury implications of a (comparatively) rich woman falling into bed with a man young enough to be her son (Despres 2021).

Sex tourism has grown in popularity amongst world travellers seeking romantic encounters, love or marriage while exploring new destinations. Some sex tourists engage in sex tourism in a bid to find true love through meaningful relationships. It is an opportunity to escape the mundane routines of everyday life and experience a whirlwind romantic adventure in the freedom of a foreign land (Simoni 2018). For some, it is for companionship or intimacy, especially if they have trouble finding a suitable partner in their home country. For others especially female tourists, they are in most cases mesmerized by the attention they get when they travel in Malawi. These are things which they feel they would not get in their home countries. Travel provides a means for middle- and upper-class Europeans and North Americans to realise sexual fantasies that hinge on the racialisation and exoticisation of people (Filep 2020).

Conclusion

Sex tourism is linked to poverty and disparities in wealth and power between the rich and poor, between men and women and between adults and children. Sex tourism is linked to causes such as poverty, marginalisation, underdevelopment and the emerging trend of tourism, and any rectification has to take a holistic view. While getting proceeds from sex work is illegal in Malawi, sex tourism is a major component of the local economy. Sex tourism has impact on the social, economic, environmental, and education aspect of Malawi. This is manifested in diverse ways. It should be noted that the way sex tourism impacts Malawi is based on the degree of dependency upon tourism and the economic plight of the country (Kelley 2015). Apart from internal efforts, international cooperation can help the sex tourism industry be regulated successfully and many children in Malawi and other developing countries be protected against exploitation. While the exploitive nature of sex tourism in places like Malawi should not be condoned, it should be recognised that many people look for sex on their own free will as part of their holiday experience. The existence of sex tourism in Malawi is directly related to the inequalities in wealth that are present between the developing and developed world.

Recommendation

Malawi as a country need to accelerate its efforts to economically develop and enforce the openness of more job opportunities for its citizens. The country has to provide more economic opportunities to its citizens. Since poverty is the major reason why most Malawian go into sex tourism, people especially women need to be empowered economically. They can be encouraged to start income generating activities and the younger ones can be advised and supported to go back to school (Grouchy 2015). The economic recommendations will deal with three main issues: the extreme poverty rampant in Malawi, the lack of career training for most Malawians (especially the women and the youth), and the insufficient and very bad payed jobs available for citizens (Nimara 2021). Regarding the socio-cultural front, there is need to give citizens, especially women, a better education, and using mass media to show the different aspects (such as corruption) that hinder its economic advancement. For those who keep accepting bribes and breaking the law with regard to the sex trade, harder correction measures should be executed. Examples of punishments are fines, jail sentences and job dismissals. Besides, the courts normally imprison an insignificant number of traffickers a year despite the many traffickers that are caught. There should be zero tolerance when convicting sex-trade involucrated individuals and apply stricter punishments for them.

The Malawi government should improve the working conditions and increase its employees' salaries. When you increase a salary, you motivate the individual to do a better job and additionally, you reduce their susceptibility to bribery from traffickers. A clear illustration of this is the actual low salaries that government officials receive, tempting them to accept money from other sources in order to have a better income (Robertson et al. 2016). Apart from training citizens especially women, the Malawi government should provide new jobs in more areas such as medical sciences and entrepreneurial jobs which would demand the women to embody leadership roles and, therefore, break with the tradition in helping reduce the wide gap between gender inequalities that now exist in Malawi. As per the findings of this study, the main reasons as to why most Malawians engage in commercial sex activities with tourists are unemployment, lack of education, and poverty (Wang & Tziamalis 2023). In order to adequately address some challenges in sex tourism and negative impacts on society, the Malawi Government need to focus on addressing all the socio-economic factors affecting it citizen. Without other comprehensive financial avenues, most families expose children to harm to get money to feed the family. That is a real situation that many impoverished, uneducated families face ((Jeong & Lee 2023).

HIV prevention work in these communities that host tourism needs to take into account the consumption of these substances whose use create difficulties regarding safe sex practices and, in the case of injecting drugs that are shared, constitutes a risk factor for HIV transmission (Phyllys et al. 2022).

Counseling services should be made available to these victims as well as some kind of halfway house to transition them into society (Bah et al. 2021). The local police in these areas, with increased training, need to find a way to gain the trust of these victims so that the victims will not be afraid of confiding in them (Glotfelty & Miles 2018). The fears of repercussion from the pimps, brothel owners, or other criminal elements keep the victims from reporting abuse. The police or government need to find a way to create a safe zone for victims of sex tourism.

In the case of socio-cultural dimensions, it is highly recommended that the government should reinforce the importance of women completing at least secondary education, as it is one way of maintaining young women away from the temptations offered by sex traffickers and sex tourists. There should be a number of programmes with the aim of keeping girls and women away from the sex industry by issuing scholarships so that they would be able to study until they are eighteen years old (Voelkel 2017). The government of Malawi should create a conducive environment for entrepreneurship. Efforts should be made to support females to become successful businesswomen. A positive image should be communicated instead of sexual one. Consequently, the view on sex trafficking as an accessible, normal thing will be changed.

People in Malawi need to be made aware of the dark side of sex tourism. Journalists in Malawi could work on projects with the government, NGOs and the civil society in which stories and real cases about child sex tourism and sex-trafficking are exposed.

The aspects of the sex tourism discourse, should not be dealt with as a separate and unique issue which those that are involved in it face in Malawi. Rather, broader issues believed to be central to understanding sex tourism as a consequence should be focused upon including economic, political, and cultural issues. There are issues of criminalisation, stigma, and discrimination that intersect sex tourism in Malawi.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted along Lake Malawi, among sex workers and sex tourists in Malawi. The study was done on a small scale which may have not brought out certain elements of sex tourism. A further study, on a bigger scale, should be conducted to establish the status of sex tourism in Malawi. Second, due to the highly sensitive nature of the topic, the possibility exists that sex workers and sex tourists gave socially desirable responses when describing their sexual activities and health behaviours towards sex tourism in Malawi.

Ethical consideration

Ethical approval for the research study was obtained from the research councils of the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) in Malawi and the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee in Republic of South Africa. Approvals were also sought from district and community leadership to conduct the study in the selected project sites. Respondents were informed about their rights within the study. Interviews were conducted at locations that maximised participant safety and confidentiality, and referral procedures were established for respondents that would be distressed or required further care.

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Athens Journal of Tourism - Volume 12, Issue 1, March 2025 – Pages 85-108

Language and Communication in Vocational Colleges: Evaluating the Language Content in South African TVET Colleges

By Mzamani Reckson Baloyi[*]

This study evaluates the language content and communication skills of the National Accredited Technical Educational Diploma (NATED) English communication course in two South African Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges. It focuses on the communication NATED courses designed for students in the National Level certificate program in Hospitality and Tourism. The goal is to evaluate the relevance of the language content and explore how well it is aligned with real-world practices in the Hospitality and Tourism fields. The study uses needs and discourse analysis approaches to identify language content and communication skills in the prescribed textbooks and determine the level of their relevance to workplace demands in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The data consisted of prescribed textbooks across three levels. The study found that the prescribed textbooks contain language structures that are not based on vocational language content. The texts focus predominantly on language tenses without encouraging students to demonstrate how to apply them to real-world contexts for business and management context such as tourism or hospitality. Based on the findings, recommendations for the language content and communication skills should be tailored to suit the needs of the Hospitality and Tourism students. The findings of this study have implications for policymakers, students and lecturers in TVET college context.

Keywords: *communication skills, course development, English for specific purposes (ESP), hospitality and tourism, language content, vocational needs analysis*

Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) requires that language content be tailored to address the specific needs of the students and accommodate linguistic features that are present in the fields of tourism and hospitality. Relevant language content and communication skills in tourism and hospitality play a great role when service providers interact with the clients. Thus, employees should be competent in applying communication in both written and spoken forms in the industry. At times, service providers experience challenges when interacting with the clients. To highlight the challenges, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) (2018) emphasises the importance of embracing a holistic approach and encompassing needs-driven communication courses as instructional frameworks. To have an effective TVET course, Avramenko (2023) asserts that the multicultural context of South Africa highlights the need for communication competence aligned with the country's linguistic diversity. Adding

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[*]Lecturer, University of South Africa, South Africa.

to Avramenko's assertion, Fandrych (2023) argues that effective communication skills are indispensable in multilingual settings, where language choices must be made with sensitivity to cultural and social contexts.

Oberhelman (2024) argues that *e*mployers value workers who of course have mastered a solid content base, but who have also a general breadth of knowledge and put that knowledge to work in solving problems and highly sought are excellent verbal communication abilities which enable employees to clearly articulate their ideas and to communicate effectively with coworkers, supervisors, and most importantly clients and customers. Despite the critical role that effective language and communication skills play in vocational success, there is growing concern about the adequacy and relevance of the language content provided in South African TVET colleges. As these institutions aim to prepare students for specific industries such as tourism and hospitality, the language instruction they receive must be aligned with the communication demands of these sectors. However, the current curriculum's effectiveness in equipping students with the necessary skills remains underexplored. This gap in the curriculum may hinder students' ability to perform effectively in their professional roles, impacting their employability and the overall quality of the workforce. The current study intends filling this gap. Therefore, it is essential to review the language content of communication courses in South African TVET colleges to determine whether they meet the industry requirements and adequately prepare students for the communication challenges they will encounter in their careers.

The study explores the language content of the communication course to determine if it is relevant to equip students with the necessary language content and communication skills required in the fields of tourism and hospitality. The main research question that the study seeks to address is: In what ways is the language content of the communication courses relevant and specific to both tourism and hospitality requirements? Below are the subsidiary questions:

- To what extent is the language content and communication skills embodied in the communication courses relevant to the business and management fields such as tourism and hospitality?
- How are terminology, phrases and grammatical sentences contextualised?
- What possible theories and approaches were used to guide the development of the Communication courses?

Research Context

The communication course under study is offered to TVET college students for them to achieve the National Qualification Framework Level 6 N6 Certificate or N6 Diploma in Hospitality and or in Tourism as well as in any business and management programme. After completing 18 months of study and fulfilling the syllabus requirements, students obtain an N6 certificate. Thereafter, they may proceed do industry-related practicals for 18 months. Upon completion of the programme, they obtain an N6 Diploma. All National Accredited Technical Education

Diploma (NATED) courses have two qualifications. These are the N6 National Certificate and the N6 National Diploma.

NATED courses start from N4 and end at N6 level. The N6 National Certificate is the third and final theoretical course. To qualify for an N6 certificate or a diploma, students can enrol for any of the following qualifications: Financial Management, Business Management, Marketing Management, Educare, Legal, Human Resource Management, and Management. The Communication N6 course is a compulsory subject in each programme, and in all qualifications. For all NATED courses, the entry requirements for an N6 National Certificate are an N5 National Certificate and the entry requirements for a N6 National Diploma is a N6 National Certificate.

The current Communication NATED courses aim to make students aware of the importance of staying motivated and being productive in the work environment. It equips students with strategies to take decisions responsibly. Students are made aware of the possibility of conflicts and stress in the workplace and how to deal with this. The course also introduces the students to skills of drafting concise communication, writing business letters, goodwill correspondence, reports, press releases, programs, and graphic communication, and trains students to evaluate situations and facts, draw conclusions, and provide solutions. It also equips students with skills in reading, speaking, listening, and writing.

Literature Review

Importance of Language and Communication Skills in TVET

Communication courses for TVET programs are designed to prepare students not only with technical skills but also with the language and communication competencies required in specific industries. According to Bhasin and Sharma (2023), effective communication in the workplace is not only about general language skills but also about understanding and using the specific terminology and discourse patterns prevalent in the fields. This ensures that graduates can seamlessly integrate into the workforce and contribute effectively from day one. Lee et al. (2022) emphasise that industry-specific language training in TVET is crucial for reducing the skills gap. The authors argue that traditional communication courses often focus on generic skills, which may not adequately prepare students for the various communication needs of specific industries such as tourism and hospitality. Therefore, the integration of industry-relevant language into TVET curricula is essential for producing job-ready graduates. Also, curriculum design plays a critical role in embedding profession-specific language into TVET communication courses.

Khan and Ali (2023) discuss the importance of collaboration between industry stakeholders and educators in designing TVET curricula. The authors suggest that involving industry professionals in the curriculum development process ensures that the language and communication skills taught are directly relevant to the workplace. Pedagogical approaches should be used to effectively teach industry-specific language. Smith and Rodriguez (2024) propose a blended learning approach that combines traditional classroom instruction with practical, industry-based scenarios. This approach allows students to practice communication skills in a simulated work environment as they are offered an opportunity and ability to apply what they have learned in their intended work contexts.

Johnson and Wang (2023) highlight the need for continuous curriculum updates and professional development for educators to keep pace with these changes. Without regular updates, TVET communication courses risk becoming outdated, leaving graduates ill-prepared for the current demands of the workforce. The impact of integrating industry-specific language into TVET communication courses on employability is well-documented. According to a survey conducted by Hernandez et al. (2023), employers across various industries report a preference for candidates who are familiar with industry-specific terminology and communication practices. The survey results indicate that such candidates are perceived as more competent and require less training, making them more attractive to employers.

The Importance of Communication Courses

Rathee and Rajain (2018) argue that communication spans multiple domains that include face-to-face interactions, digital literacy, virtual environments (such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook), and more traditional forms like email and texting. Each domain has its own protocols regarding spelling, grammar, norms, audience, and message length. Effective communication skills are vital for corporate professionals because they improve and facilitate idea-sharing and interactions with employees. In educational institutions, these skills are crucial for managing and teaching courses. This ensures that students are equipped with relevant language content and communication skills for their fields. However, there is limited research on the coherence between the Communication N6 courses and the specific needs of business and management courses such as Tourism and Hospitality. Mohamed (2006) and Komba (2012) note that students' communication abilities in their specialized subjects have not significantly improved. This indicates the need for better alignment of language content and communication in the TVET college communication courses.

This study adopts Komba's (2015) definition of effective communication, which involves selecting the appropriate channel for a specific purpose. Salmani Nodoushan (2020) emphasises the importance of tailoring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to meet the needs of fields, such as Tourism and Hospitality. This study advocates that Communication courses' language content and communication skills should be contextualized to reflect the specific requirements of these fields. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998) outline key characteristics of ESP by focusing on meeting the specific needs of students in particular disciplines and develop the materials that are appropriate for those disciplines, and help students acquire the knowledge necessary for their fields.

Global Journey of TVET Colleges: An In-depth Historical Exploration

The historical development of TVET internationally has passed through challenges, reflected diverse approaches, and responded to the unique needs of various countries. One notable example is Germany, where the dual apprenticeship system has been a stalwart of TVET for centuries. Germany's model intertwines practical training with classroom education, creating a symbiotic relationship between educational institutions and industries. This historical trajectory has not only contributed to Germany's vigorous workforce but has also served as a benchmark for vocational education globally (Mayer et al. 2022). Shifting to Greece's context, Amiradis (2010) stated that tourism significantly impacts the Greek economy and necessitate a strong focus on employee education, particularly in foreign language skills, which are essential for tourism professionals. This involves applying theoretical principles of didactics for 'Special Purposes'. This implied that the curriculum for tourism and hospitality had to be customised to suit the communication needs of the tourists by developing the subject matter that is ESP driven.

The primary issue lies in the limited command of foreign languages, particularly English, which is essential for interacting with international visitors. This language barrier often leads to misunderstandings and tourist dissatisfaction, thereby negatively affecting the perception of Greek hospitality. Regarding the challenges, Nikolaidis et al. (2024) adds that service providers frequently struggle to cross-cultural variances and complicates interactions with tourists from diverse backgrounds. To address these challenges, Greece has prioritised the enhancement of language training programs for tourism professionals and aims to cultivate a more customer-centric service approach (Sotiropoulos & Dimitriou 2023). Switzerland, too, stands as a beacon in the international history of TVET. Renowned for its apprenticeship system, Switzerland places a premium on blending theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience and creates a skilled workforce deeply connected to industry needs. This example has resonated worldwide which influences TVET practices and emphasises the effectiveness of collaborative models between educational institutions and employers (Diem & Wolter 2023).

Turning to the United States, the historical context of TVET was significantly shaped by the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917. This legislation marked a turning point by providing federal support for vocational education in secondary schools and encourages the growth of vocational training programs across the nation. The act laid the foundation for the integration of vocational education into the broader educational context and the recognition of its essential role in preparing a skilled workforce (Grubb 2022). In the context of China, the historical development of TVET is a testament to the country's strategic response to its developing economic context. In recent decades, China has invested substantially in modernising its vocational education system to equip its workforce with the skills necessary for technological and industrial progress. This proactive approach highlights the integral role TVET plays in supporting economic growth and development (Li & Zhou 2023).

Australia's TVET history is exemplified by the establishment of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. These institutions have been instrumental in providing vocational education and training and aligns with the changing needs of industries and creates a versatile and skilled workforce. The Australian experience showcases the adaptability of TVET to meet the changing demands of the workforce and economy (Smith & Keating 2022). In the Nordic countries, including Finland and Sweden, the integration of TVET into comprehensive education systems has been a historic cornerstone. These nations prioritise high-quality vocational education and positions it on par with academic routes and emphasises the importance of providing diverse educational pathways. This approach has contributed to creating a balanced and well-prepared workforce (Billett 2023).

While these international examples demonstrate the historical evolution of TVET, it is essential to consider the contemporary challenges and opportunities faced by vocational education globally. The digital age and technological advancements require an adaptable TVET system that can address the changing nature of work and equip individuals with the skills needed for emerging industries.

The TVET colleges in African countries reflect a diverse set of historical, cultural, and economic factors. One notable example is South Africa, where TVET colleges have undergone significant transformations. Historically, the apartheid era resulted in a fragmented and unequal education system which impacts on TVET as well. In post-apartheid South Africa, there has been a concerted effort to restructure and elevate TVET colleges to address skills shortages and enhance employability. The South African government has focused on improving infrastructure, curriculum relevance, and industry partnerships to align TVET with the country's economic needs (Komba 2023). In Nigeria, the evolution of TVET has been influenced by a similar recognition of the importance of vocational skills. The Nigerian government took initiatives to modernise TVET, emphasizing the need for a skilled workforce to drive economic development. Efforts included curriculum revisions, the introduction of new technologies, and collaborations with industries to ensure graduates are well-prepared for the job market (Adeyemi & Ojo 2023), Kenya's TVET context has also witnessed developments in response to changing economic dynamics. The Kenyan government recognises the effective role of TVET in enhancing innovation and entrepreneurship, has invested in upgrading infrastructure and enhancing the quality of vocational education. Initiatives like the Kenya Youth Employment and Opportunities Project aim to strengthen the TVET sector by improving access and relevance (Mutinda 2022). In Ghana, TVET colleges have transitioned to address the country's economic needs and promote self-employment. Government initiatives such as the Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (COTVET) aim to coordinate and streamline TVET programs. These efforts focused on creating a framework that aligns with industry demands and encourages entrepreneurship (Opoku-Asare 2023).

TVET colleges in African countries reflect historical, cultural, and economic factors. As these nations highlight the challenges and opportunities associated with vocational education, the recognition of TVET's relevant language content to enhance communication skills gaps remains an area to be improved. Nations could continue to refine and strengthen their TVET systems to meet the communicative needs of their societies.

Theoretical Framework: English for Specific Purposes

The use of ESP as a theory and the application of Needs and Discourse analysis approaches were used to contextualise subject matter served as conceptual framework of this study. Hui (2017) states that ESP is the bridge curriculum between English for General Purposes (EGP) and students' needs. In addition, Liu and Zhang (2020) state that needs analysis aims to present learners' wants, needs, and lacks, prior to organising a course. Analysis is one of the fundamental principles in establishing a curriculum that address the needs of the programme and the individual students. Figure 1 shows a pictorial model accentuating steps necessary to be taken when the NA is applied to develop a teaching and learning programme's language content, discern it to gauge its relevance to a specific language context, and infuse it in a syllabus for a specific field of study. Thereafter, the model is described and explained in the context of the expected syllabus for language content for a tourism and hospitality communication course.

Figure 1. *John Munby's Communication Needs Processor (CNP) (Niemiec 2017, p. 225)*

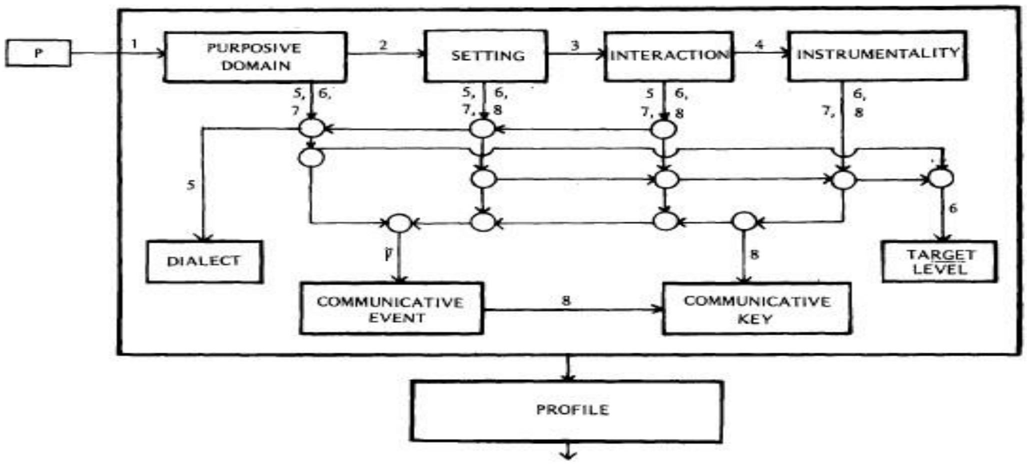


Figure 1 shows a specialist domain and in the case of this study, it refers to the communication courses at TVET colleges i.e., tourism communication and hospitality courses. First, the specialist domain influences the language and culture to be taught/ learned. In the case of the Communication course for tourism and hospitality, the domains would call for the study and knowledge of terminologies, genres, discourses, and cultures interconnected to tourism and hospitality. The specialist domain also influences the knowledge required of lectures for the Communication course, and the type of training they should receive.

The target situation must be identified. In the context of this study, the target situation is the TVET college setting and the fields to be focused on are the tourism and hospitality industries. This implies that the linguistic features that should be embedded in the prescribed textbooks, syllabi, and examination question papers must be in the vocational language of tourism and hospitality. Also, the language content of the evaluation process or assessment techniques must seek to test students' abilities using an assessment technique that is embedded with vocational phrases, jargon, and content knowledge from tourism and hospitality perspectives. The content of the picture will be used comparatively with the content of the Communication courses i.e., its linguistic language features, the content of the examination question papers language content to investigate the level of the connectivity and interrelatedness with the language content and knowledge required in the fields of tourism and hospitality.

Research Methodology

Research Approach

This study employed a qualitative research methodology, which, as described by Drummond and Camara (2007) drawing on Denzin and Lincoln (2000), is a form of social inquiry that relies on non-numeric data, such as words, and includes various types of textual analyses. The purpose of this approach is to understand the extent to which the language content and communication skills in the communication courses prescribed for TVET colleges is relevant to the industry specific of the business and management courses such as tourism and hospitality. The researcher read the content of the communication courses, interpreted documents, and analysed content to gain an in-depth understanding of the language used in the communication course for TVET colleges at the N6 level. This approach was especially useful in exploring vocational language content and linguistic features relevant to tourism and hospitality.

Research Paradigm

The study utilised interpretivism as its paradigm. The paradigm emphasised that document analysis is a relevant approach to apply to gain in-depth the understanding of the subject matter under study. Alharahsheh and Pius (2019) explain that interpretivism focuses on the idea that truth is shaped by individual interpretations that make its research methodology context-sensitive and resistant to generalizations. The study applied an interpretative phenomenological approach to explore the language content and communication skills in a communication course and gather insights from participants. This interpretivist approach revealed the relevance gaps of language content and communication skills in TVET college courses. The identification of the gaps led to making informed recommendations and contributions to the field.

Exploratory Research Design

Research design is the strategic framework that guides a study, integrating its components coherently to address the research problem effectively (Thakur 2021). Exploratory research design, as highlighted by du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2023), is distinct from correlational studies in that it examines the varying degrees of relationships between variables rather than just identifying them. This study utilised an exploratory research design to assess the relevance of language content and communication skills in the Communication courses for business and management within the tourism and hospitality. The exploratory design was particularly suited to understanding the content of the prescribed textbooks i.e., communication courses in TVET colleges. The exploration facilitated the evaluation of how well the course content aligns with students' needs and the demands of the work environment. This led to an in-depth exploration of complex issues within the South African TVET Colleges' educational context and capturing the gaps that exist between the content in the subject matter and the business and management field of tourism and hospitality sectors.

Document Selection Criteria

To ensure the relevance and quality of the documents to be analysed, a set of criteria to be followed was set and then followed when selection is done. Since the focus and the scope of the study was on investigating the relevance of the English Language Content and communication skills taught to students studying programme for business and management purposes such as tourism and hospitality at TVET college students in South Africa, the Communication NATED courses prescribed textbooks and the syllabus were targeted, with focus on the concise or language usage section of the texts.

Sampling Sites

The researcher applied for permission from the department of education via TVET colleges to access institutions and conduct research. After obtaining permission, the researcher visited the college campuses to negotiate to access the Communication prescribed textbooks for NATED programme. Report 191 was also accessed via REVIEWED CURRICULUM (dhet.gov.za). To access the research sites, negotiations took place between the researcher and the management of the respective TVET colleges. Finally, the website was accessed, and the documents extracted and read analytically using needs and discourse analysis approach.

Population

The study included both lecturers and students associated with the NATED Communication courses at two TVET colleges. It involved 15 lecturers who were directly responsible for teaching the Communication courses across the N4-N6 levels of the NATED program. These lecturers were targeted because of their expertise and active involvement in delivering the language content within the curriculum. It also encompassed approximately 155 students who had registered for the NATED Communication courses at these levels. These students represented a diverse group actively engaged in learning the English language and communication skills required for their academic and professional development in the business world such as tourism and hospitality.

It also incorporated a review of teaching and learning documents used in the Communication N4-N6 courses. These documents included syllabi at all levels of the NATED communication courses all of which were reviewed and analysed to understand how language content is presented and integrated into the curriculum. This approach allowed for an in-depth examination of prescribed textbooks. The review provided insights into the relevance of the language content to the fields of tourism and hospitality.

Sampling of Documents

The study employed purposive sampling to choose documents. du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2023) highlighted that when purposive sampling is used, the researcher purposefully chooses the elements that they wish to include in their sample based on a set list of characteristics. To do so, the researcher looked at the research questions and determined the characteristics required, and based on the availability of the relevant characteristics, the selection of the sample was carefully carried out considering those who have the required characteristics and disregarding the rest. The sampling process of the documents in this study followed the aforesaid suggestion as indicated by Celliers et al. (2023). The selection process focused on teaching and learning materials for teaching the English communication courses. Concerning the sampling process followed, Shaheen et al. (2016) argued that purposeful sampling resides in the proposition that information-rich samples are to be selected to have an in-depth view of the phenomena. Purposive sampling helped to pinpoint the teaching and learning documents prescribed to teach Communication course were used. The following prescribed textbooks for business and management courses at NATED level were targeted and sampled: Communication N4-N6 courses.

Data Collection

The data was collected through documentary analysis using Needs and Discourse analysis, specifically targeting, and analysing the language content sections of the prescribed textbook, *Communication N courses*, the syllabus, and the summative assessment for 2023. According to Kabir (2016), data collection is defined as a systematic process of gathering and measuring information on variables of interest to address research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes. The data collected aimed to reflect on the linguistic and communicative needs concerning specific writing and communication requirements in business and management contexts, such as tourism and hospitality. This included an examination of lexical range, particularly technical vocabulary and collocations, the correctness of grammatical structures within the context of specific purposes, pragmatic competence, coherence, cohesion, and contextual relevance.

Data Analysis Framework: Needs and Document Analysis

To ensure a thorough and systematic approach to qualitative data analysis, this study adopted Taylor's (2021) recommendation of employing an iterative process to systematically categorize data, allowing for the identification of emerging themes and patterns. Specifically, an iterative approach was applied to analyze the data collected from documents. The process combined elements of needs analysis, discourse analysis, and qualitative content analysis to provide a comprehensive examination of the data.

The language content of the texts was analyzed interpretatively through the systematic classification of variables, as discussed by du Plooy-Cilliers et al. (2023). They describe qualitative content analysis, also referred to as textual analysis, as making an educated guess about the most likely interpretations of a text. This interpretative approach enabled the study to delve deeper into the contextual and linguistic nuances of the material.

To enhance the validity and reliability of the findings, triangulation was employed by consulting various teaching and learning materials used in Communication courses as well as relevant literature on language. This triangulated analysis ensured a well-rounded understanding of the language content and its relevance to the Communication curriculum.

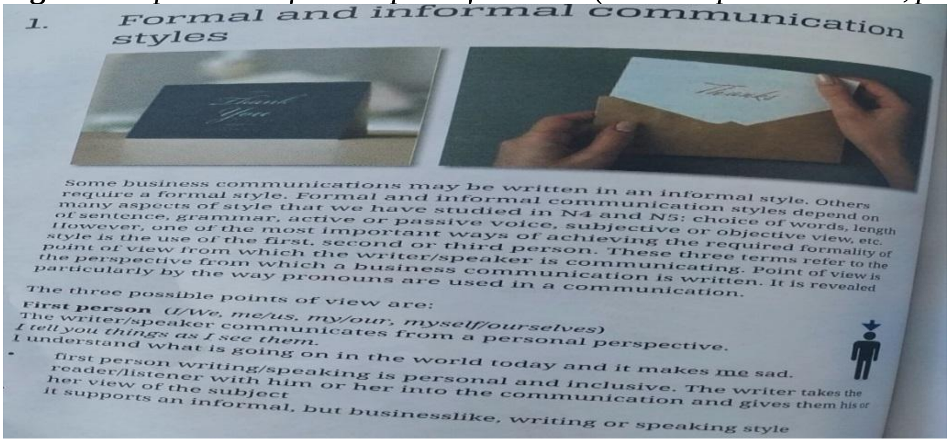
Findings: Language Usage Section in Communication N Courses Textbooks

This section provides findings from the explored communication course and the syllabus. Through a simultaneous analysis of the textbook and the syllabus using and discourse analysis the following findings emerged:

Relevance of Language Content and Communication Skills

Communication NATED courses cover a range of language usage lessons and assessment activities. Below are lessons and assessment activities excerpted from the language usage section of the Communication NNATED level 6 prescribed textbooks: Figure 2 presents the content of the lesson and its purpose.

Figure 2. *Explanation of the Purpose of a Lesson (Steenkamp & Wade 2021, p. 170)*



1. Formal and informal communication styles

Some business communications may be written in an informal style. Others require a formal style. Formal and informal communication styles depend on many aspects of style that we have studied in N4 and N5: choice of words, length of sentence, grammar, active or passive voice, subjective or objective view, etc. However, one of the most important ways of achieving the required formality of style is the use of the first, second or third person. These three terms refer to the point of view from which the writer/speaker is communicating. Point of view is the perspective from which a business communication is written. It is revealed particularly by the way pronouns are used in a communication.

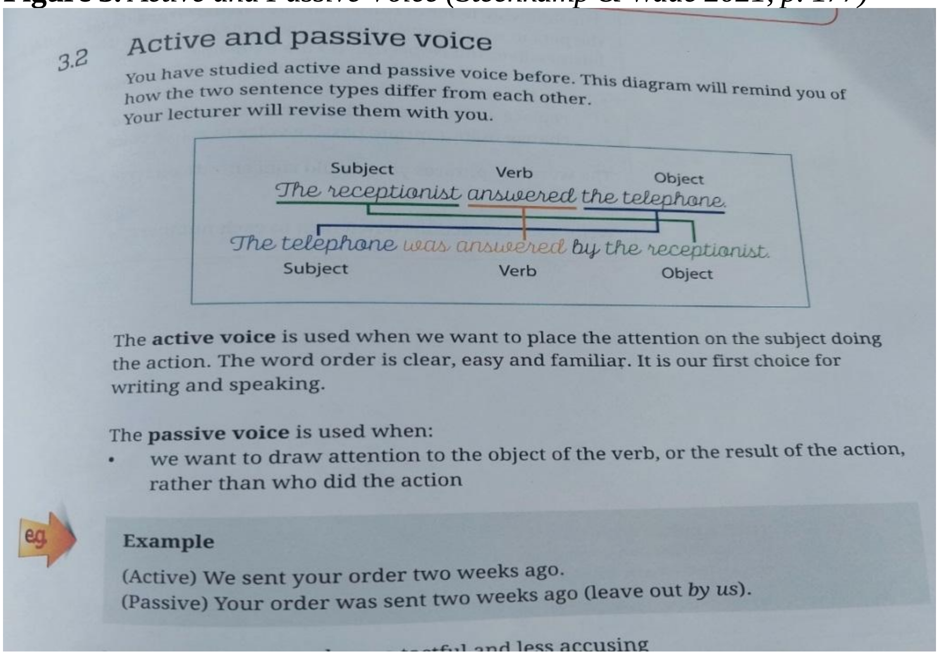
The three possible points of view are:

First person *(I/We, me/us, my/our, myself/ourselves)*
The writer/speaker communicates from a personal perspective.
I tell you things as I see them.
I understand what is going on in the world today and it makes me sad.

- first person writing/speaking is personal and inclusive. The writer takes the reader/listener with him or her into the communication and gives them his or her view of the subject
- it supports an informal, but businesslike, writing or speaking style

Figure 2 presents a sample lesson that teaches students the difference between formal and informal communication and which words are applicable in formal communication and which are applicable in an informal communication setting. The lesson contains generic sentences to illustrate the use of language in an informal and formal setting. Explanation of the differences of formal and informal communication is not placed in context of business and management programme to teach students to construct sentences within their intended workplace context. For example, the example given “First person (I / we, me / us, yourself, myself / ourselves) does not adequately reflects the context or the discipline and therefore, it is generic and less reflective of the corporate language content and vocabulary. Figure 3 from the NATED communication level 6 textbook is a lesson explaining how sentences are written in active voice and how they are changed to passive voice.

Figure 3. *Active and Passive Voice (Steenkamp & Wade 2021, p. 177)*



3.2 Active and passive voice

You have studied active and passive voice before. This diagram will remind you of how the two sentence types differ from each other.
Your lecturer will revise them with you.

The **active voice** is used when we want to place the attention on the subject doing the action. The word order is clear, easy and familiar. It is our first choice for writing and speaking.

The **passive voice** is used when:

- we want to draw attention to the object of the verb, or the result of the action, rather than who did the action

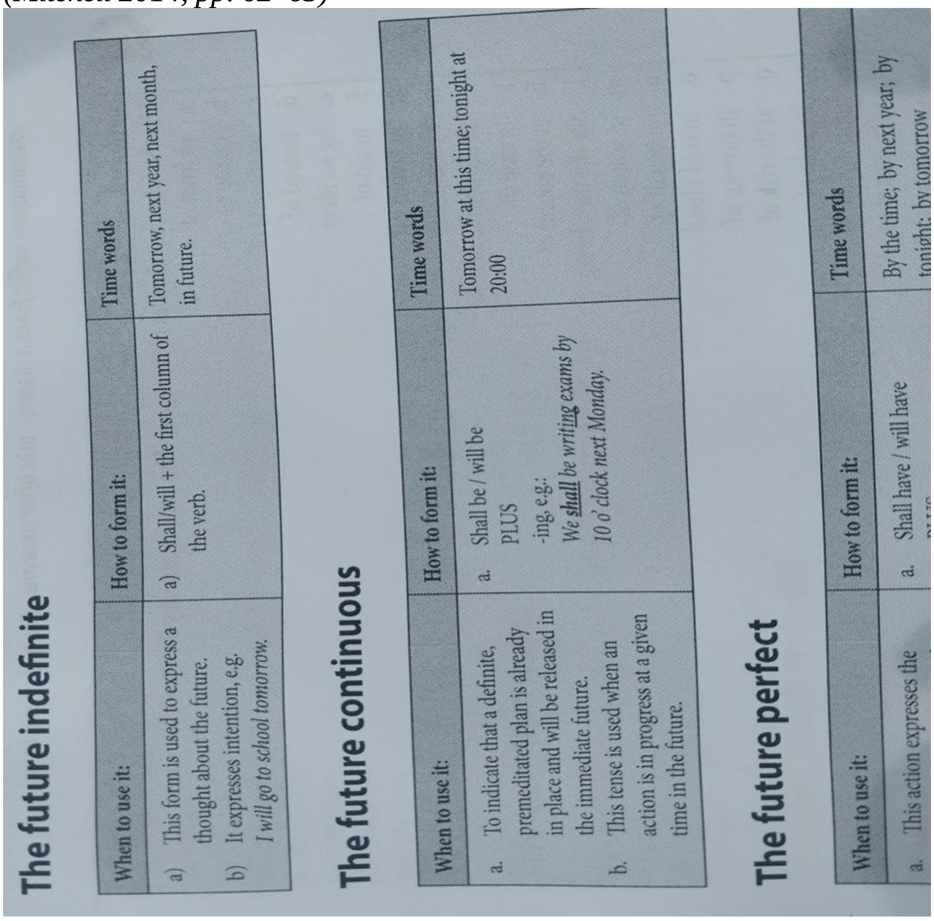
eg

Example

(Active) We sent your order two weeks ago.
(Passive) Your order was sent two weeks ago (leave out *by us*).

Figure 3 presents a lesson on how active and passive voices grammatical structure is used. For an example the following sentence given as an example (Active) "We you're your order two weeks ago" the phraseology and syntax and register is generic. The sentence is applicable in any context or discipline. The argument is that the words, vocabulary, and sentence itself must be accommodative of specific linguistic features that distinguishes the discipline or the subject matter of other disciplines. The question one could ask is: What makes the sentence direct the listener to know that it is about tourism, hospitality or any other business and management communication courses. The examples limit the student to write or construct sentences in a generic context and this could limit them from writing language content that is vocational in terms of applying linguistic features that relate to business and management context. The communication courses for business and management purposes such as tourism and hospitality ought to include language content and communication skills that are extended beyond simple grammatical language structures for general language usage. Again, Figure 4 from NATED level 4 communication prescribed textbook demonstrates how students enrolled in the management and business courses for communication in the corporate world could be applied. (See Figure 4).

Figure 4. *Future Indefinite, Future Continuous and the Future Perfect Tenses (Mitchell 2014, pp. 62–63)*



The future indefinite

When to use it:	How to form it:	Time words
a) This form is used to express a thought about the future. b) It expresses intention, e.g. *I will go to school tomorrow.*	a) Shall/will + the first column of the verb.	Tomorrow, next year, next month, in future.

The future continuous

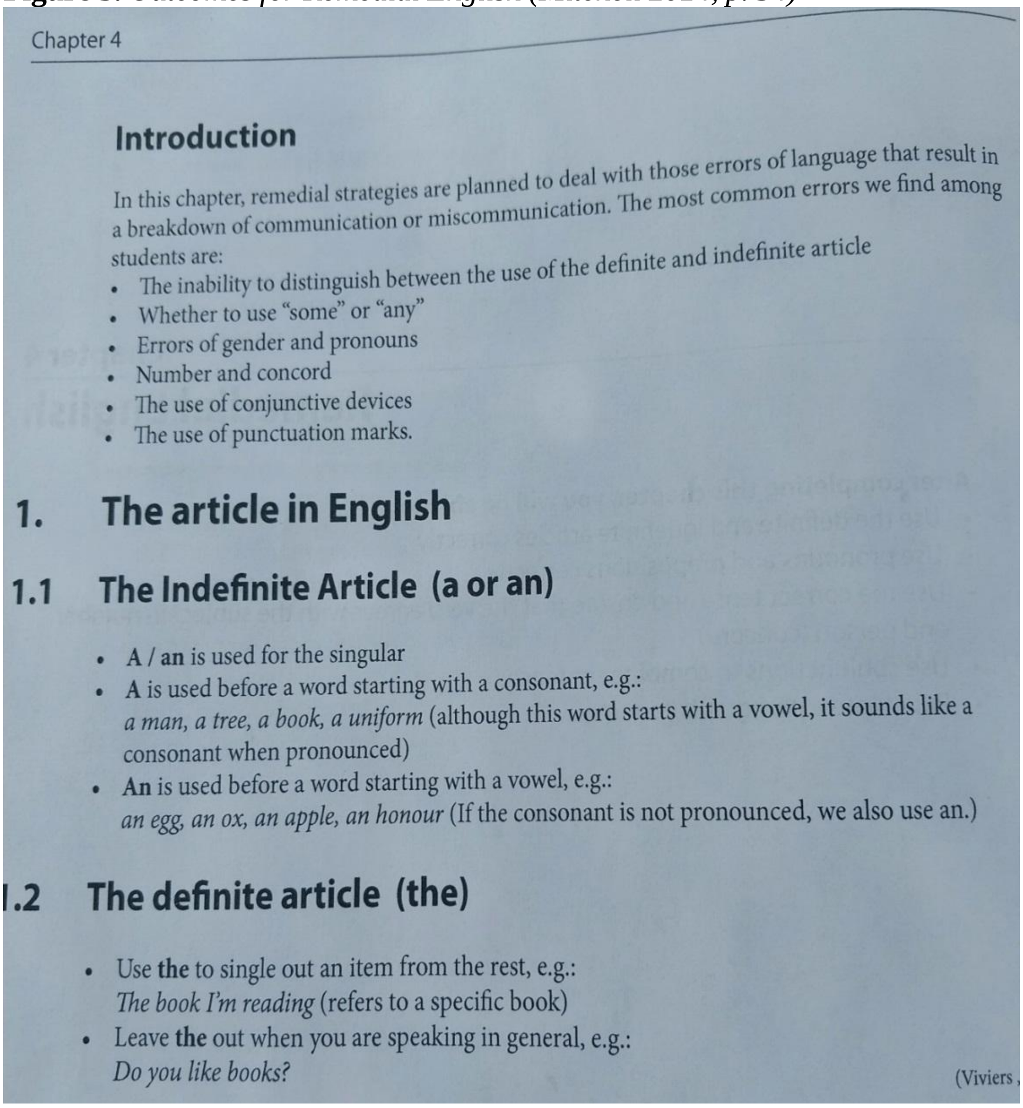
When to use it:	How to form it:	Time words
a. To indicate that a definite, premeditated plan is already in place and will be released in the immediate future. b. This tense is used when an action is in progress at a given time in the future.	a. Shall be / will be PLUS -ing, e.g.: *We shall be writing exams by 10 o' clock next Monday.*	Tomorrow at this time; tonight at 20:00

The future perfect

When to use it:	How to form it:	Time words
a. This action expresses the	a. Shall have / will have	By the time; by next year; by

Figure 4 describes and explains what future tense is and how the future indefinite, the future continuous tense and future perfect are formed. Again, this is a good approach to teach language content to students who are not orientating themselves to apply language content and communication skills within the workplace industry of specific business and management such as tourism, hospitality etc. However, for the students whose intention is to apply vocational language content and fields- specific vocabulary, the relevance of the content should speak to the business context, providing sentences that are industry driven. Figure 5 presents the specific outcomes that NATED level 4 students are expected to demonstrate in their usage of language content in written and spoken form when they are at workplace.

Figure 5. *Outcomes for Remedial English (Mitchell 2014, p. 54)*


Chapter 4

Introduction

In this chapter, remedial strategies are planned to deal with those errors of language that result in a breakdown of communication or miscommunication. The most common errors we find among students are:

- The inability to distinguish between the use of the definite and indefinite article
- Whether to use "some" or "any"
- Errors of gender and pronouns
- Number and concord
- The use of conjunctive devices
- The use of punctuation marks.

1. The article in English

1.1 The Indefinite Article (a or an)

- **A / an** is used for the singular
- **A** is used before a word starting with a consonant, e.g.: *a man, a tree, a book, a uniform* (although this word starts with a vowel, it sounds like a consonant when pronounced)
- **An** is used before a word starting with a vowel, e.g.: *an egg, an ox, an apple, an honour* (If the consonant is not pronounced, we also use an.)

1.2 The definite article (the)

- Use **the** to single out an item from the rest, e.g.: *The book I'm reading* (refers to a specific book)
- Leave **the** out when you are speaking in general, e.g.: *Do you like books?*

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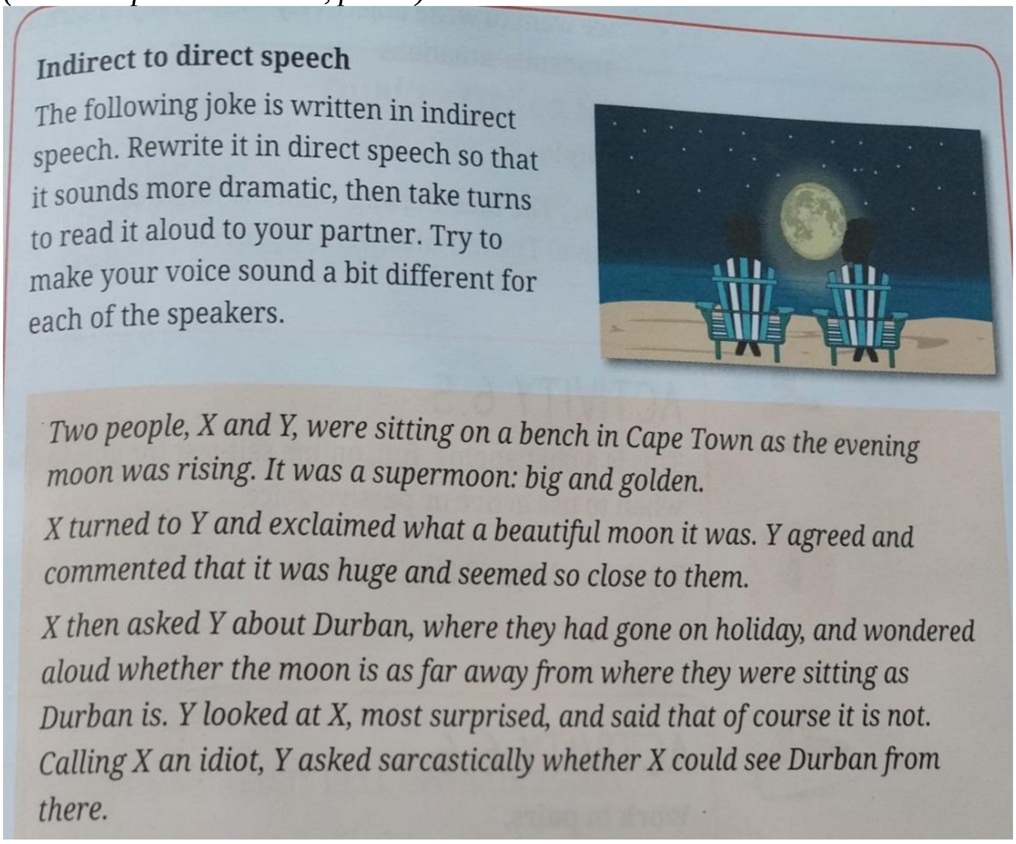
Figure 5 presents outcomes that students must achieve when they learn language content in the Communication NATED course at level 4 in TVET colleges. In the context of business and management in tourism and hospitality, the correct use of definite ("the") and indefinite articles ("a", "an") is essential for precision and clarity. Articles are fundamental in defining specificity. For instance, saying "the hotel" versus "a hotel" can significantly alter the meaning conveyed in communication, whether written or spoken. When students master the correct use of articles, they enhance their ability to convey clear and accurate messages, a vital skill in the tourism and hospitality industry. The outcome on how definite and indefinite articles should be used is less specific in terms of elucidating how they could be correctly used in the context of hospitality. For example, "Students will accurately apply definite and indefinite articles in written and verbal communication to ensure clarity and precision when describing services, locations, and scenarios specific to the tourism and hospitality industry" could serve as a precise expected outcome than the generic one that state "Use the definite and indefinite articles correctly" without specificity of the context. Similarly, the correct use of pronouns and prepositions plays a crucial role in maintaining the flow and coherence of communication. Pronouns help avoid repetition and maintain clarity, while prepositions establish the relationships between different parts of a sentence, whether in terms of time, place, or logic. "Students will effectively utilize pronouns and prepositions to construct clear, coherent, and contextually appropriate sentences in both written and spoken communication, enhancing the accuracy and professionalism of interactions within the tourism and hospitality industry". The communication course lacks clear example such as "After the guests check in, they can enjoy a complimentary welcome drink in the hotel lobby". A clear and specific outcome could enable and encourage the lecturer to develop lessons that teach students to construct sentences using pronouns in the business and management sectors. Figure 6 from NATED level 6 Communication prescribed textbook is a sample from the textbook used to teach students how to write direct and indirect sentences and present information in the business and management workplace context.

Figure 6 presents lesson content on how to teach direct and indirect grammatical structure in a communicative competence approach. Decontextualized sentences have been used. Decontextualized sentences allow students to focus on mastering the fundamental grammatical structures without the challenges of specific content. This approach helps students grasp the mechanics of language, such as tense usage, sentence structure, and the conversion of direct to indirect speech. The Tourism and Hospitality industry requires a high level of context-dependent communication. The effectiveness of communication in this field often hinges on understanding the cultural, social, and situational nuances of each interaction. When students are primarily exposed to decontextualized sentences, they may struggle to apply these grammatical structures in real-world situations where such nuances are critical. For example, while a student might be able to correctly convert a direct statement to an indirect one in a classroom exercise, they might find it challenging to do so in a real-life conversation with a guest, where the tone, cultural sensitivity, and situational appropriateness are just as important as grammatical accuracy. Professionals in business and management such as tourism and hospitality must adapt their communication style to suit different contexts, such as providing customer service, handling conflicts, and engaging with individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Figure 6. *Use of Direct and Indirect Speech and Indirect and Direct Speech (Steenkamp & Wade 2021, p. 177)*



Indirect to direct speech

The following joke is written in indirect speech. Rewrite it in direct speech so that it sounds more dramatic, then take turns to read it aloud to your partner. Try to make your voice sound a bit different for each of the speakers.

Two people, X and Y, were sitting on a bench in Cape Town as the evening moon was rising. It was a supermoon: big and golden.

X turned to Y and exclaimed what a beautiful moon it was. Y agreed and commented that it was huge and seemed so close to them.

X then asked Y about Durban, where they had gone on holiday, and wondered aloud whether the moon is as far away from where they were sitting as Durban is. Y looked at X, most surprised, and said that of course it is not. Calling X an idiot, Y asked sarcastically whether X could see Durban from there.

Presence of ESP Elements

The language content in NATED Communication courses reflect a general approach to English language proficiency, lacking the specificity required for ESP as applied in business and management programs such as tourism and hospitality. The examples used in the textbooks to teach subjective and objective language, direct and indirect speech, tenses, and active and passive voice do not incorporate industry-specific vocabulary or context.

This lack of integration can have significant implications for students' readiness to engage in professional environments. In industries like tourism and hospitality, where communication is central to operations, the ability to use industry-specific language is crucial. Contextualising language content leads to “Guided participation”. According to Magennis and Connolly (2014), guided participation refers to the social or interpersonal experiences concerned when in the novice phase of learning. It alludes to such activities as conversations, communications, interactions, and collaboration which occur between individuals as they negotiate and co-ordinate their participation in ‘socio-culturally structured collective activity. When language content is contextualised and tourists be guided during interactions, the level of communication is enhanced and made easier. This enables the tourists to better understand the activities that they engage on in their destinations. Without exposure to the specialized vocabulary and communicative practices unique to these fields, students may struggle to apply their language skills effectively in real-world settings. The gap between general English proficiency and the specialized needs of these industries means that graduates may require additional training or experience to meet the demands of their roles, potentially hindering their career progression.

The absence of ESP elements in the Communication NATED courses may undermine the students' confidence and competence when entering the workforce. Industry professionals expect a certain level of familiarity with the jargon and communication styles prevalent in their fields, and without this, students may find themselves at a disadvantage. Integrating ESP into the curriculum would not only enhance the relevance of the course content but also provide students with a more comprehensive understanding of how language functions within their chosen industry. This would better equip them to navigate the challenges of their future careers, making them more competitive and effective in their roles.

Research Procedure

The research applied Needs and Discourse analysis approach to explore and evaluate the language content sections of the NATED communication courses for South African TVET colleges. Data was collected during the first semester of 2024. The researcher explored and evaluated the Communication and N4 and N6. To answer the research questions, sections with language content and communication skills were read and analysed following the ESP principles and determine the relevance of the language content to the business and management sectors.

Reliability and Validity Measures

To enhance content validity, the research applied broader approach by intensive and extensive reading subject matter and incorporating data collection instruments i.e., documentary analysis following Needs and Discourse analysis. Through triangulating data between the Needs and Discourse analytic approach, the study strengthens the credibility and richness of the collected data. Research questions were reviewed, rechecked, and realigned to align the subject matter with the purpose of the study.

In terms of reliability, the study used additional texts to check and re-check the relevance of the language content to the business and management communication sources. Consistent purposive targeting of variety of Communication courses from level 4 to 6 and other related sources contributed to the study's reliability.

Ethical Considerations

Permission to collect data was granted by the research ethics committee at the university under study, and the ethical clearance number is. The name of the TVET colleges have all been given pseudonyms to protect the identities of all institutions. The researchers obtained consent from the targeted TVET colleges, explaining the purpose of the study and the voluntary nature of their participation. The researchers ensured that all the collected data was stored securely and in compliance with data protection regulations. TVET colleges were provided with a debriefing at the end of the study, explaining the purpose of the study and how the data from the textbooks would be used.

Discussion of Findings

The explored Communication NATED prescribed textbooks for TVET contain language content and communication skills that lack relevance to the workplace's requirement of vocational language. Below is the discussion of the findings following the research questions.

In what ways is the language content of the communication courses relevant and specific to both tourism and hospitality requirements?

The findings reveal a substantial misalignment between the general language instruction provided by the textbooks and the specific communication demands of students pursuing careers in the tourism and hospitality industries. The textbooks cover essential language concepts such as formal and informal communication styles, subjective and objective language usage, and the distinction between active and passive voice, all of which are critical for developing strong general language skills. However, the concepts have been applied in general context than in sentences that talk about tourism and hospitality. The concepts of subjective and objective language use, and the application of active and passive voice do not address Salmani Nodoushan (2020)'s emphasises on the importance of tailoring English for Specific Purposes (ESP) to meet the needs of fields, such as Tourism and Hospitality. In the NATED Communications courses, these topics are presented in a context that is largely theoretical and not directly applicable to the practical, industry-specific communication needs of students in business and management courses, particularly within the dynamic environments of tourism and hospitality. Activities such as filling in grammatical gaps or converting direct speech to indirect speech are structured in a way that focuses on reinforcing generic basic grammatical accuracy. While these exercises are valuable for building a solid foundation in language mechanics, they do not extend into the practical application required in real-world scenarios that professionals in tourism and hospitality encounter daily. The activity on teaching conversion of sentences from direct speech to indirect speech and vice versa in Figure 5 is out of context and it fails to encourage the students to apply context driven sentences. It fails to reflect the expected realities in their expected workplace. Students may find decontextualized sentences less intimidating and easier to engage with, others might perceive these exercises as disconnected from their future career goals.

The lack of industry context is further highlighted by the syllabus's general aim of developing formal and informal communication skills. Contrary to the syllabus' aim to encourage generic language content, Komba (2012) note that students' communication abilities in their specialized subjects have not significantly improved. The ability to switch between formal and informal communication is particularly important in the tourism and hospitality sectors, where professionals must frequently tailor their communication style depending on the audience and the situation. However, the syllabus does not go beyond this broad aim to explore how these skills should be adapted to specific industry scenarios, leaving a gap in students' preparedness for the communication challenges they will face in their careers.

To what extent are language skills embodied in the communication courses relevant to the tourism and hospitality fields of study?

The findings indicate that while the communication courses outlined in the textbook provide a foundational understanding of language skills, their relevance to the tourism and hospitality fields of study is limited. The core language topics covered—such as formal and informal communication styles, grammatical structures, and the distinction between active and passive voice—are essential for general language development. However, the extent to which these skills are tailored to meet the specific communication demands of the tourism and hospitality industries is notably insufficient. Komba (2023) states that TVET curriculum should be aligned so that it can be relevant to meet the country's economic needs. For students in tourism and hospitality, the ability to effectively communicate in a variety of contexts is crucial. Professionals in these fields must navigate a wide range of interactions, from engaging with guests and resolving complaints to coordinating with suppliers and managing staff. These interactions often require a variety of understanding of both formal and informal communication, cultural sensitivity, and the ability to convey information clearly and persuasively. The activities and exercises in the communication courses do not adequately address these industry-specific requirements. For example, exercises that focus on grammatical accuracy, such as filling in gaps with appropriate pronouns or converting direct speech to indirect speech in unrealistic scenarios, do not reflect the complex and dynamic communication situations encountered in the tourism and hospitality sectors. This study notes the assertions of Hernandez et al. (2023), when they argue that employers across various industries report a preference for candidates who are familiar with industry-specific terminology and communication practices. For the TVET students to be effective and efficient in both written and spoken communication, their learning materials on language content must be contextualised.

While the NATED communication courses provide a solid foundation in general language skills, their relevance to the tourism and hospitality fields of study is limited by a lack of industry-specific focus. The course content does not sufficiently prepare students for context-dependent communication challenges they will encounter in these industries, highlighting a need for a more targeted approach that aligns language instruction with the specific demands of tourism and hospitality.

How do the Communication Skills that are Taught in these Courses Reflect Elements of ESP

The findings suggest that the textbook's approach to language content instructions lack sufficient elements of ESP, particularly in the context of tourism and hospitality education. ESP is a branch of language education designed to meet the specific needs of learners in particular fields, emphasizing the practical application of language skills in professional settings. One of the core principles of ESP is that language instruction should be tailored to the specific needs of the learners, considering the language practices they will encounter in their professional lives. However, the activities presented in the textbook, such as filling in grammatical gaps or converting direct speech to indirect speech, are designed with a focus on grammatical accuracy rather than on the practical, industry-specific communication tasks that students will need to perform. Contrary to that, Hui (2017) states that ESP is the bridge curriculum between English for General Purposes (EGP) and students' needs and in the case of the language content in the NATED N4-5 textbooks, the needs of the learners are not catered for since the language is not tailored to the context of tourism and hospitality. For example, practicing indirect speech through a simulated bomb threat scenario does not reflect the kinds of communication challenges faced by professionals in tourism and hospitality, such as managing guest relations, addressing complaints, or coordinating with suppliers and colleagues. This indicates a lack of ESP-oriented content that would help students develop the language skills needed for specific professional contexts.

The lack of industry-specific context in the activities indicates that the textbook does not fully embrace the principles of ESP. While the foundational language skills covered are necessary, the absence of targeted, practical application relevant to the students' chosen fields suggests that the textbook's approach is more aligned with general English language instruction rather than with ESP. This kind of approach to teaching language content misalign with Liu and Zhang (2020) as they assert that needs analysis aims to present learners' wants, needs, and lacks, prior to organising a course. This limits the effectiveness of the curriculum in preparing students for the specific communication challenges they will face in the tourism and hospitality industries, where precise, context-sensitive language use is critical for success.

Limitations

Limitations are defined as constraints to your study based on the research methodology and design. Limitations are constraints you cannot control in your study. Primarily, limitations deal with the constraints of the research method (Miles 2019). The key limitation of this study is its focus on one context i.e., TVET colleges in South Africa and language content and communication skills in prescribed textbooks for NATED programmes Communication courses instead of expanding it to another context internationally. Lack of time and resources contributed to this limitation. Since this is an exploratory case study, it suggests that contexts with similar language content and communication skills in prescribed textbooks and syllabi be revised and ESP principles be applied in the process of analysing and adjusting the language and communication skills to address the corporate language demands.

Recommendations

Decontextualised grammatical sentences play a role in building foundational language skills, they should be integrated with contextualized learning experiences. This balanced approach ensures that students not only understand the grammatical rules but also can apply them effectively in the specific, real-world situations they will encounter in the Tourism and Hospitality industry. Students will be better equipped to communicate with confidence and cultural sensitivity, essential qualities for success in their future careers. This could include considering and applying ESP principles to ensure that the language content and communication skills are customised to the needs of students in their chosen fields of study. Language lesson activities should be contextualized to reflect real-world scenarios from the introductory stage of the course, helping students become familiar with industry-specific terminology and jargon, which will enhance their communication skills for future careers. In support of this view, Oberhelman (2024) states that a unique feature of good oral and written communication skills, critical thinking skills, the ability to work in teams, and empathy (intercultural) skills is that they are *transferable*, that is, they allow a person to move from one job to the next, or to react to changes in their existing job.

Pimentel-de-Oliveira (2023) states that it is only through the redesign of tourism policies, considering the needs and satisfaction of the local society, that the tourism sector can effectively manage the activity. This approach involves implementing a planning strategy that aligns with the characteristics of the territory, respects its resources and its population, and aims to establish truly sustainable tourism. Curriculum developers should design and develop communication courses for business and management programme that mirror real communication tasks students will encounter in their professions, such as drafting promotional materials or creating standard operating procedures. Regular needs analyses should be conducted to ensure the syllabus remains relevant to industry demands. Discourse and needs analysis should be applied when language content for a course for Specific purposes is developed.

Conclusion

The study concludes that while the NATED communication courses provide a solid foundation in general language skills, their relevance to the tourism and hospitality fields is limited by a lack of industry-specific focus. Although the courses cover essential language topics such as communication styles, grammatical structures, and active versus passive voice, they fall short in addressing the specific communication demands of these industries. Effective communication in tourism and hospitality requires not only mastery of formal and informal communication but also cultural sensitivity and the ability to navigate dynamic and complex interactions, such as resolving guest complaints, coordinating with suppliers, and managing staff. The textbook's activities, often emphasizing grammatical accuracy in unrealistic scenarios— such as converting speech forms or completing grammatical exercises—do not reflect the real-world communication challenges students will face in their professional careers. This misalignment indicates a missed opportunity to incorporate the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), which emphasize tailoring language instruction to meet the needs of learners in specialized fields. By failing to integrate industry-relevant contexts into its curriculum, the textbook limits its effectiveness in preparing students for the practical, context-dependent communication skills required in the tourism and hospitality sectors. These findings underscore the importance of adopting a more targeted, ESP-oriented approach to better align language instruction with the demands of students' future professional roles.

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